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CATHERINE-PARIS



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Catherine-Paris

by
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Translated by
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T

I. Catherine

Catherine-Paris

CHAPTER I

The Springtime of Love

CATHERINE-PARIS was the daughter of a Rumanian noble who had been educated on the banks of the Seine, and of a mother who had visions.

"I often saw you in dreams, little daughter, before you came into the world," she used to say.

And in a few years Catherine would learn where her mother had dreamt of her. Although her birthplace was a thousand miles south-west of Moscow, it suffered from the same blizzards in winter. On this twenty-eighth day of January, 1889, the thermometers registered thirty-five degrees below zero, and the green jars in druggists' windows had frozen and burst. The cold being greater than even the Russian coachmen could bear, the streets were empty of carriages, and the snow was still untracked by sleighs. Once more overwhelmed by its disastrous climate, Bucharest was deaf, dumb, and paralysed; it was blinded also. A blanket of frost was spread over the double windows, which are sealed up by the inhabitants twice every year—in winter, by pasting newspapers to the frame and laying thick pads across the sill; in summer, by lowering the awnings, closing the shutters, and drawing black curtains for protection against that other prowling enemy, the incandescent air.

"Open the windows wide, nobody ever opens them here!" moaned Catherine's mother in her delirium.

Madam Philophtey, the midwife, who for thirty years had been attending the Bucharest women in their labours, and diminishing their girth without thereby diminishing her own, walked to one of these hermetic casements and pretended to open it. She rattled the handle, jerked at the shade, and taking advantage of the opportunity, made a leisurely survey of the street. Through the seaweed of a window which the frost had transformed into a white aquarium, she saw this unfamiliar sight: the Calea Victoria deserted at noonday, and swept from end to end by gusts which had raced from the Baltic Sea across three hundred leagues of forest and plain. A man was painfully advancing between two walls of virgin snow. In a round fur cap and a long overcoat of which the upturned collar hid his ears, he looked like some lost grenadier of Napoleon's Grand Army. Against his heart, in guise of a weapon, he was holding a great red-and-yellow bouquet of Italian carnations and mimosa in a lace cornucopia torn by the wind. He passed the house without raising his eyes. He was Prince Jon Dragomir, grandfather of the child that had just been born. His coachman, Lipovan, who belonged to the sect of the Very-Pure Doves, had refused to harness the horses, and the Prince was plodding through the blizzard to wish a happy birthday to his mistress.

In the arms of a mother who believed in dreams, and of whose dreams she was the fulfilment, Catherine would soon be carried far from the land of her birth. During the first hours of the night, in a fever that

passed from one to the other, Marie Romulesco would murmur her secrets to the child :

"It was in Paris, little daughter, that I began to think of you. It was in the lovely month of May when lilies-of-the-valley parade the streets in little wagons, when sprinkling-carts appear, when rain falls and the sun shines in the same moment, and when there are so many new leaves on the old trees of the Avenue Gabriel, of the Avenue Marigny, and of the Faubourg du Roule where your grandmother lives, that the streets are as green as a forest !

"It was in a dream that I saw you, little daughter," she murmured. "I dreamt that I was coming out of a department store ; it was the Louvre, I think, and I walked into a crowd of little children. They were clamouring round a floor-walker who was giving away balloons. Only one of the balloons was left, and all the children wanted it, and all of them raised their hands to clutch at it . . . you passed and merely raised your head ; I saw your face. 'This little girl will be my child,' I said. The floor-walker gave you the balloon, on which a rooster was painted. The rooster crowed, and I woke up. . . .

"Another time I saw you playing in the gardens of the Tuileries, round the great basin where the children launch their sailboats, which always upset. Yours did not upset, in spite of the gusty wind which wrinkled the water, whipped at your bare legs, and made you whimper with anxiety. Your long hair covered your face like a wave, but still I could recognize you by the grace of your neck. Afterwards I saw you not only in dreams, but sometimes in a theatre or in the street. You were growing out of your childhood ; I met you as a schoolgirl and as a young woman. After our marriage, I pointed you out to your father at a

restaurant in the Champs-Élysées where we were having our first open-air dinner of the season, on a May evening which must have been that on which you began to exist elsewhere than in my soul. Your father's back was turned to the apparition. I said to him : 'Look behind you, at the third table to the right, the young woman in black and rose.' He moved to another chair and kept watching her face, which was yours, my child. I wonder if the story of Jacob's ring-straked cattle applies to mankind. Do we first conceive through the eyes ?"

All unhappy young women are lyric poets, even those who do not write in verse. Catherine's mother belonged to the category of charming people who are poets unconsciously. Being the daughter of a visionary, Catherine would learn what ordinary children never know ; she would discover her own genesis ; she would be told the profound reasons and the futile incidents which had produced, surrounded, and determined her incorporation into life. Had she been born to Spanish parents, they would have christened her Encarnación, Concepción, or better still Anunciada, for these Catholics feel that the annunciation by the angel is all-important. Being Rumanian, she was called Catherine like her grandmother that lived in the Faubourg du Roule ; and Catherine-Paris in memory of her mother's only sister, who, born during the siege of Paris, had died in 1872 after bearing that name for only a year.

She would learn even the route which her parents had followed on the night of the annunciation. They passed under the green vellum which, in May, covers those transepts which are the alleys of the Champs-Élysées ; they skirted that cathedral-porch which is the Place de la Concorde. The asphalt glittered ; it

had rained. Reaching the Horses of Marly, they crossed the avenue diagonally, arm in arm. Without leaving the shelter of the trees, they strolled to the Cours-la-Reine, where the urban forest, as it approaches the river, acquires a rustic beauty. They sat on one of those double benches which the municipality has scattered along the Seine, and immediately they felt that their seat had become a confessional. Confessions of faith, confessions of sin, confessions of love, were being made that balmy night by other couples, who occupied similar benches through all the length of the city, upstream and down. Great two-wheeled carts, drawn by Percherons, were descending the river bank toward Auteuil, carrying building-stone which shone in the night like cubes of phosphorus.

Marie was the first to open her heart. She told him something she had never before felt able to tell: that she did not love him, but wished to bear him a child that she could love. She hoped it would be a girl, and one resembling the young woman of the restaurant. This daughter would find a husband in Paris. Her happiness would be a ransom for that of her mother. Thus, Marie could always remain a faithful wife. She did not confess, however, to the sudden fear of being unfaithful which she had felt that very day as she thought of the young Frenchman she had loved before her marriage. Constantine admired the courage and honesty of his wife. He was much more guilty than she, since he had married her to obey his father, and in spite of his loving another. This other was a young woman he had met in the Latin Quarter: feature by feature, she resembled the apparition in the restaurant. . . . And, while they were lamenting the prejudices of their parents, which had brought about their union, they began to

weep and embrace each other, as if their pity had ripened into love. Through the groves of Paris, these two foreigners returned to their lodging; they reached the Rue Matignon, and climbed the stairs to the apartment of Marie's mother, with whom they were staying for a few weeks. Would they ever realize the dream of their two youths, which had proved to be the same dream—that of living in Paris?

Catherine would be the fulfilment. She would be her father's sin and her mother's revenge. Born fifteen hundred miles from the Ile de France, she would still be an islander. Brought into the world during one of those blizzards which for thirty-six hours put Bucharest in a state of siege, she would nevertheless be called the Springtime of Love, in memory of the country where she was conceived, in a moment of happy forgetfulness, by a Wallachian noble and a young Moldavian, who would have loved each other nowhere else.

"It was the time," her mother would later say, "when all the villages of France were celebrating May with dances, songs, and processions to the churches. It was the month of Mary."

CHAPTER II

Catherine Leaps Backwards

THE premature death of her parents forced Catherine to skip a generation. Because of this backward leap, she was destined to wear that indefinable air of propriety which children acquire from association with their grandparents. She was three years old when her father died. This misfortune drew a line of demarcation through her life. On one side lay the country of her birth ; on the farther side was Paris. Her memories of the first shone not so much by their number as by their intensity. A strange language was spoken there, of which she would later remember only two words : *asculta* and *foc*. She would also remember a sunset. Held in her nurse's arms, with her little nose pressed against the window, Catherine had enjoyed that spectacle, bold as a conflagration and noble as a tragedy, which is the end of a clear day on the Wallachian plain. Her imagination would fashion a homeland out of this setting sun ; it was the point at which her memory began.

Catherine had never before looked to the west, for her nursery faced the morning sun. However, on the day her father died, the nurse had been told to carry her into the servants' quarters, so as to prevent her seeing the workmen who were nailing bands of crape above the door. In a dingy sort of closet there, which served as a pantry, was a single window which faced the evening sky. Thus, when Catherine was

very young, her attention was distracted from death by a brilliant spectacle. One of the great matters of life was successfully concealed from her on this occasion ; later, the household would invent ways of hiding the other. Our good parents are never eager to inform their children that they have given us death, innate in life ; nor to tell us how life is given.

By losing her father, Catherine had lost her roots ; she had become a cut flower, but of this she knew nothing. All her memories of Constantine Romulesco were lost in the bustle, novelty, and excitement of her first journey. Crossing Europe from east to west, a little girl drank forgetfulness out of her silver mug, in which water, shaken by the movement of the train as if by a tempest, had taken the place of milk. During the few days which remained before her departure, she would glance about her at bedtime, which was also playtime, in search of a special sort of caress she had ceased to receive. A moustache should be tickling her cheek and making her laugh. A creature with two great legs between which she might easily fall, and two great hands which she could not resist, should be seizing her, lifting her from the floor, and placing her on its knees. Then the game would begin, slowly at first. She would be bounced rhythmically up and down, while a deep voice repeated :

When Papa rides horseback to Paris,
He walks, and he walks, and he walks. . . .

Soon she would grow impatient, shout to encourage her steed, and pound it with her heels. Then the great knees would rise and fall more quickly, breaking her laughter into fragments. She was trotting :

When Mamma rides horseback to Paris,
She trots, and she trots, and she trots. . . .

The fearsome knees were moving still more rapidly. Tossing her into the air, they would let her fall back in a joyous swoon :

When Catherine rides horseback to Paris,
She gallops, she gallops, she gallops. . . .

This game, which ended with a fall, was a prefiguration, like all the other games of children. Tag, for example, proclaims the hurry of life and its briefness ; Hide and Seek is the emotions, seeking ; Drop the Handkerchief is desire, pursuing ; Blind-man's Buff is the blindness of love and its gropings.

As might have been expected, Catherine forgot the pretence as soon as the reality appeared. To play at travelling was no longer necessary ; instead she travelled. For three nights and three days the train was her delight ; it passed through cities at a walk, crossed the bridges at a trot, and galloped through the open country. In the sonorous stations, it bucked. It was bearing her farther and farther from a land to which, if her father had lived, she would have been tied by his business affairs ; now she was leaving Rumania for ever. As she climbed into her suspended berth with little joyous cries, she did not know that the author of her first pleasures was being left behind, in a lower, more dusky apartment, one which was lighted by no such reassuring night-lamp as flickered here in the train. This journey across Europe was taking her back to her point of departure, which was Paris. She had always known that she was going there. Not only predestined, but premeditated, this

child was vowed to the city whose name she bore, as other children are dedicated to the Virgin.

When she descended the steps of the Gare de l'Est, on the fifteenth of February, 1893, it was as if, like another Mary, she were being presented at the Temple. A slow rain was falling. The winter dawn was black ; through the raindrops that trickled down the windows of their hired landau she could see lights flickering past. At first these sparkling tears were all she saw. But her ears were soothed by a tremendous hum, which was mingled with the beating of her heart. In the Rue Matignon, she had her first meeting with the French Revolution, in the person of Mme Fenouil, knitting woman and concierge. Catherine did not tremble ; she held out her hand to this wolf disguised as a doorkeeper. Mme Fenouil let her heart be melted : "Oh, what a pretty child ! Won't Madam Princess be proud of her !"

Then, by the gloomy staircase which smelt of leaking gas and coffee grounds, they climbed in procession to the mezzanine, where Madam Princess was waiting in the doorway surrounded by her women : Angela the cook and Maria Robinet.

Cheerfulness, kindness and poverty greeted Catherine on the threshold of her new home. Her arrival in this little, low-ceilinged flat, which her mother, with a note of tenderness, called "the Matignon Rookery", represented a triumph of mind over matter in a conjugal struggle which had been waged for thirty-three years by a good-natured woman and a madman. This household war had spread from parents to children, even to the third generation ; it assumed all forms, but chiefly the economic form. It had begun about 1860, at Miroslava on the banks of

the Pruth, in an old and vast Moldavian manor-house surrounded by a chaplet of marshy lakes. There it was that Prince Jon Dragomir had imprisoned his wife for all the days of their honeymoon, which moon would still be shining, had only the husband's wishes been consulted. He spent his days in shooting water-fowl, which, in this marshy wilderness, were always in season. This explained why he stayed at the side of his wife, who had brought him this paludinous estate as a dowry. If he never thought of divorce, even during the eleventh year of their marriage, which had been the only disastrous year for him, it was because he had no intention of losing a manor more fertile in reeds, more crowded with wild duck, geese, swans, great smoky herons, and bitterns, than was even the delta of the Danube. With his fowling-piece in hand, he forgot women; he calmed his nerves by killing birds. This was his method for curbing his other passions. Hence, he went fowling as much as he could. For eleven years, he was found in the marshes every evening when the birds were making their last flight. Four days out of seven, he slept with his wife; on the remaining days, that of the Lord included, he inspected his other estates and lived with his mistresses.

However, when the eleventh year had passed, Princess Catherine took advantage of his Sunday absence and departed for France, carrying the eight children with her. She left a letter on his gun-case, where it would not be overlooked. Definitely it announced that she had no intention of coming back; she was going to take an apartment in Paris, so as to supervise the education of her sons and make sure that her daughter learnt the art of dress. She would be glad to receive her husband if he came there to

visit her. He came. He did not attempt to alter her resolution; neither did he fall out with her, which would have interfered with his revenge. He pretended to pardon her, and when he left, she was pregnant for the ninth time. Before going, he announced that her income would be a thousand francs a month, that she would have to be satisfied with this sum, and that he would come to see her, without further warning, once every year.

Thanks to the siege of Paris, Princess Catherine was spared this redoubtable visit in 1871. She brought her last child tranquilly into the world during the horrors of the siege, and gave her the name of Catherine-Paris. A short time afterwards, she left the Hôtel du Rhin, where she had been lodging since her arrival, and took a furnished apartment in the Boulevard Saint-Michel, near the University. Her only cares were financial, and, for a woman of her character, the lack of money was a minor evil. She changed her social class without changing her heart, and found it simple to live in poverty because her spirit was not impoverished. Crossing the streets on foot was the only novelty which filled her with terror. During her childhood, which had also been spent in Paris, she had made all her excursions in a carriage. These days, she left her apartment rarely; but when she had an errand and was obliged to cross the boulevard, she used a method of her own; she would speak graciously to a policeman, alleging that her eyes were weak and asking for his arm—something which no *agent de police* had been known to refuse. Then, under the eyes of the waiting horses and the surprised pedestrians, her hand resting lightly on the sleeve of her blue-coated cavalier, she advanced lightly, full of confidence. From her

twenty-ninth year, like an old woman, she had only two dresses at a time, both of them black : a wool dress for every day, and a silk dress for Sundays. Her sons grew up at her knee till the time came to send them away to school ; her daughter never left her. All her children adored her because she was kind, mocking, and tender, and because she amused them with trifles. Her sweetness and high spirits charmed even the servants, who, with the children and M. Beau, their tutor, formed the whole of their circle. The unexpected arrival of the father spread terror annually through this sheepfold. Each time, either by threats or by arguments so powerful that they resembled threats, he tried to bring back the fugitive. He had condemned her to poverty, but only to convince her that her place was elsewhere. Why should she remain obstinate ? Did she not know the terms of their marriage contract—that all her income was at his disposal, and so would remain until his death ?

She listened to her husband's arguments without advancing her own. Nothing would make her return to the marshes of the Pruth ; her calm resistance maddened him. Would he divorce her ? By no means. She knew very well that once the marriage was dissolved, he must give back her dowry, abandon his massacres of birds, and surrender the restrictive power which he now could exercise, even from a distance. She listened to his exhortations with the air of saying : "Thunder on, you can't hurt me." The more he lost his temper, the calmer she became. She had her own way of ending the discussion when the children arrived in the midst of a scene : she would lead them away as she whispered her verdict in their ears : "Turlututu, a fig for you !" It was her method

of reassuring them ; of proving both the emptiness of paternal wrath and the liberty of thought which she herself enjoyed. What if he swore to appeal to the embassy or the police ; what if he threatened to take away her children, to make her a beggar ? Turlututu ! . . . There was something impish in her nature, and all the brutal outbursts of her husband could not prevail against this imp. Repeating a famous sally of the Princess de Conti, she told him one day : "Don't forget that I am able to bear princes without you, and that you are able to bear no princes without me !" From that day, he lost one of his methods of punishment. His annual visits became shorter and shorter, but he never omitted them, lest she forget that he was there to spoil her life. However, a week every year sufficed to convince him that she lacked everything, that she had lost her beauty, and that he had nothing to fear from a woman who was satisfied with two dresses a year and a stroll in the Luxembourg Gardens every Sunday.

As age crept over her, he thought she would grow tired. He could never fathom the secret of her resistance, nor understand how a woman of her type, accustomed to the comforts of a mansion, could live in a dingy flat without a chair of her own, without a trace of her former habits, serving rather than being served, and all for a silly whim renouncing luxury, which would serve at the very least to prolong her youth. He did not know that Paris was "in all the world, the place where one is best able to live without happiness," and that hence it was only natural for one to be happy there. He did not even know that he had made her unhappy. Being very logical, as madmen are, he believed himself sinless ; wasn't the

law on his side? Never had he been unfaithful to his wife under their own roof.

One by one, as they passed their final examinations, he took back their sons. She knew that these partings were inevitable. Like all mothers, she resigned herself to the cruel metamorphosis of her little boys into grown men. There, in the distant marshes, they would become hunters like their father. She might never see them again. At best, she could expect an occasional glimpse. And if she did see them, it would only be like Latona, to seek for the last traces of humanity in children who were now transformed into frogs. When her youngest son was gone, she left the Boulevard Saint-Michel with the daughter that remained, and took an even smaller apartment in the Rue Matignon, a street abounding in gardens. She hoped to keep her daughter by her side.

Marie was still in pigtails when she fell in love with a French boy, the schoolmate and chum of her brothers. Louis Philipon was the son of a professor at the Sorbonne, a close friend of M. Beau. This youngster's charming face, his easy manners, his talents—he could write verses, act, and cover the tablecloth with caricatures of the famous actors he was imitating—so overwhelmed the young Moldavians that they invited him to the house one Sunday for dinner, and every Sunday thereafter. Intoxicated with his brilliance in the classroom, they became his disciples. Marie was frightened, dazzled, and conquered; she dreamt only of becoming Mme Philipon. Madam Princess, in the simplicity of her heart, could see no obstacles. The customs of a professor's household differed very little from those of the Rookery. Both families had a maid-of-all-work, a dinner served from the middle of the board, a stroll

in the gardens on Sundays, a trip to the museums on Thursdays, and a theatre-party once a month—in a word, the comforts of humble folk in the midst of a great civilization. Madam Princess could imagine no more enviable fate for her daughter than to live with the admirable Philipon in the Rue de Condé, just around the corner from the Luxembourg. On the left bank of the Seine, they would continue the charming life which is led in Paris by so many obscure Parisians. It was the only life Marie had ever known.

When this offer of marriage was communicated to Prince Jon, his anger burst forth in lordly phrases. These, however, found no echo among his sons. His fury grew from its loneliness. He realized that his vengeance had been turned against himself, since its effect had been to transform his family into a nest of democrats. He abandoned everything: his business affairs, his mistresses, his fowling. It was November; the woodcock were flying overhead. He left. He burst into his wife's apartment without being announced. There was a furious scene, cut short by his eagerness to make another at the Philipons'. He strode into their dining-room, where Louis's father, the professor, was preparing a lecture. The arrival of this tall old man, seething with indignation, spread terror first in the heart of the maid, and then in the more resolute soul of the master. Offered a chair, Prince Jon remained standing. Conscious that he was dealing with a professor, he spoke in historical terms. He said that he was descended on the distaff side from Maximus, a consul of Rome three hundred years before Christ. Then he mentioned literary matters. Voltaire, in the "History of Charles XII", had praised Cantemir, who, besides being a hospodar

of Moldavia, was the great-great-grandfather of Prince Jon. Before consenting to the family alliance which they had dared to suggest, he should like to know the relations between the Philipons and Roman history, or between the Philipons and literature. Perceiving from the bewildered silence of the professor that no such relations existed, he continued. His daughter would inherit an estate of fifteen thousand acres. How many acres could young M. Philipon contribute to the union?

Three days after this outburst, Prince Jon returned to his marshes with Marie, who was heart-broken at having to remain a noblewoman. The engagement had been broken by young Philipon himself. He had written Marie, saying that he was not a king's son and therefore could not aspire to the hand of the Sleeping Beauty. Gifts were returned; they consisted on both sides of books, letters, and unpublished poems. Six months later, Louis Philipon made a brilliant match: he married the daughter of a professor in the Collège de France. Marie, at the end of a year, was betrothed to Constantine Romulesco, who was descended in direct line from the last hospodars of Wallachia. When the two principalities were united in 1862, Bucharest had become the capital of both, and it was in this city that the wedding took place. The Dragomirs, like other great Moldavian families, had recently purchased a dwelling there. In addition to this mansion, formerly the property of a rich Armenian, Prince Jon now possessed the favours of a lawyer's wife, his latest mistress. Marie's wedding was celebrated at night with all the pomp of the Eastern Church, which renders the union of two Christians a consecration and investiture. The groom, recently saved by his family from a dangerous

mésalliance, found Prince Dragomir's daughter to be a very gentle bride. She was more than simple, so people said ; indeed, they called her stupid ; but she was the sort of wife to be tolerated by a broken-hearted lover. Marie thought of her husband as a fellow-traveller who would be glad to take her back to Paris, to her mother's home, under the conventional pretext of a honeymoon.

And so Madam Princess, who had stayed in the Rookery, had her daughter returned to her by a stranger. This first return was only temporary. Once more he gave her back, and permanently, a few years later. Constantine died in 1892, during a fearful epidemic of typhoid fever which was ravaging Bucharest and its suburbs. In a low voice, between two fits of delirium, he urged his wife to flee from that city with her child, and return to Paris, the only place in the world where one could live.

Accordingly, the mother, the grandmother, and the grandchild were united on the day when Catherine, aged four, first crossed the threshold of the little apartment which she would learn, like the others, to regard as home.

"By God's mercy, those with the same heart have been joined together under the same roof," said Madam Princess as she stood on the landing and clasped the two refugees in her arms.

Marie, by rallying to the Rookery, had joined the rebel forces. She had chosen liberty for herself and her daughter as against paternal tyranny. In Paris, the child would live as modestly as if she had been born a Philipon. She would grow up in a republic, under the influence of a grandmother who had fought the Revolution in her home. She would be free to love whomever she wished ; her mother believed

that she was made for happiness. Every mother believes this of her wonderful children. Where she has failed, they will be sure to succeed. She expects them to be proof against misfortune, as if she had given them something else than life.

CHAPTER III

The Middle Ages and Renaissance of Catherine

LITTLE Catherine's education was begun by uneducated women. Maria Robinet put her to bed and dressed her in the morning. She took Catherine walking, and sent her out to play in the little court when the mother had one of her attacks and the doctor arrived, filling the apartment with the smell of antiseptics. If it rained, Angela the cook invited the little girl into her kitchen. There are children who lose all contact with the people as soon as they lose their nurse ; guarded by the third estate of governesses, they never learn the warmth of plebeian friendship ; it is something they lacked at an age when the lowly and humble, reassured by the smallness of their masters, love them and teach them wisdom. Maria Robinet, who could not read, was a living library for Catherine : she was a Bible, a geography, a collection of proverbs, a book of fables, a code of honour, a chart of love, a primer of etiquette, a Shorter Catechism, and she was all these things at once. The old peasant woman, who was born near the Cathedral of Bourges, had the soul of a cathedral ; and she instilled a feeling of French mysticism into the little Daco-Roman. Through her, Catherine lived in the Middle Ages ; her young imagination was peopled with red devils and white angels ; she was terrified by the doings of the Fiend, but as soon as she invoked Jesus-Mary, the curtain ceased its sinister movements and draped

itself in soothing folds. She would fall asleep only after repeating an evening benediction which Maria Robinet had learnt at the convent of the Holy Saviour, where she served during her youth. "Praised be Jesus Christ!" the maid would say. "For ever and ever!" replied the child. On this assurance that something divine would continue eternally, Catherine closed her eyes. A God loved her, and she would love Him also, for ever and ever. Her head, empty of doubts, rested deliciously on the pillow.

While Maria Robinet was imbuing her heart with a feeling of infinite love, Angela the cook was teaching her to enjoy life and to live from hour to hour. After her middle ages, Catherine had her sixteenth century. Angela excelled in making life agreeable. She had learnt the fundamental art of domestic happiness: that of creating appetites which she was able to satisfy. By her, Catherine was fed with special dishes and overwhelmed with maternal tenderness. Servants have often been known to adopt their master's children—a compliment which the masters rarely pay back in kind. Years before, Angela had lost a daughter, and seeing that Catherine was going to lose her mother, she adopted the little girl. She did much more for her than she would have done for the other. Believing her to be made of a different stuff, she imagined that Catherine felt desires unknown to an ordinary child. Hence, there was always a spark of poetry in her lavish wealth of attentions. Since Catherine was an orphan, far from her homeland, sprung from an almost mythical race and an indeterminate country, she aroused the imagination of this simple woman who, for her part, came from Pontoise. In winter, on her way home from the market, Angela would think of Catherine and stop at the fruiterer's to buy green orange branches

which bore flowers and fruit at the same time. And sometimes in the morning, she would lay violets on the breakfast tray, beside the roll which she had been careful to warm in the oven.

Madam Princess, for fear of contagion, kept Catherine away from her mother. However, the little girl found a goodly and numerous company in Angela's kitchen on rainy afternoons. There was the cat ; there were the canaries ; there was Angela herself, who did the work of several people and made the noise of an army ; there were also miracles : cats would come forth from cats and canaries from canaries. It was like the scriptural miracle of the loaves and the fishes as described by Maria Robinet. From the two canaries she had in the beginning—ah, famous canaries, which had won a prize from the Paris Association of Canary Fanciers—Angela boasted of procuring dozens of birds. She employed them as gifts and bribes. The descendants of the two prize-winners filled all the Faubourg du Roule with their trills. Some of them could be heard in the lodge of Mme Fenouil ; others were found in the creamery, at the stationer's, at the butcher's, and even in the beadle's pious chamber at St. Philip's. And still their number grew. Every spring Catherine was surprised to see new birds in the cage. Three times a year, kittens appeared in the old cat's basket. Where did they come from ? Angela, when questioned, refused to answer. She said she knew nothing about it, not being educated. Maria Robinet, consulted in her turn, declared that the canaries were obeying the commandment of the Lord to grow and multiply ! Her explanation had the great merit of being positive. Catherine, who saw hell within the kitchen stove, asked nothing better than to be shown Heaven in

the window where the cage was hung. To grow?—she was doing this herself; to multiply?—it was what she was trying to learn from Angela's teaching: two times two are four. . . . But the canaries upset all her notions of arithmetic: two of them would be transformed into five or even six! And, what was even stranger, a single cat in a basket produced five others!

Angela's kitchen resembled the earthly paradise. Not only were miracles accomplished there, but consummate joys were to be tasted there. First, that of shelling peas, which was the greatest of them all. To the pleasure of opening a little casket was added the excitement of a bet: would the green pearls be even or uneven? Catherine learned to make wagers as she shelled; at the same time she was learning the pleasures of touch. She gave the radishes their bath, washing them like children to remove the tiny bits of garden soil which streaked their faces; in this way she learnt the joy of dabbling in water. Later on, as she became more skilful, Angela let her play with knives. She would pare the apples in a spiral and make a necklace out of the parings, which she wore with pride. While Catherine played at working, the cook would sing old ballads, of which she knew a great number. However, the little girl would ask for the same songs over and over. Children never grow tired; their likes and dislikes are constant; let them laugh at something once and they laugh always; do what you will, they are sure to say: "Do it again!" And, if grown persons are quickly fatigued by their company, it is merely because they are faithful.

Like all peasant women, Angela was glad to repeat. She was a sort of foster-mother, and though she

was full of vulgarity and rough good-humour, she respected Catherine's privileged character and was delicate in her manner of advancing opinions about life. If the little girl asked : "Where is your husband, Angela?" she would answer proudly, "*At Rangoon . . . up in the moon!*" so as not to say that he was dead. If Catherine found a living worm in an apple and burst into cries of horror, her household mentor would give her a first lesson in philosophy. "It takes all sorts to make a world," she would say; and the child would grow accustomed to the idea that every creature has a right to live, including worms in apples.

When her early education was completed, she had the faith of Maria Robinet, which was that of a thirteenth-century peasant; and this mysticism was tempered with the epicurean teachings of Angela the cook. Now, having reached the age of seven, Catherine passed from the regimen of women to that of men. This basic change took place in a very informal way. It was time she learnt how to read, and there was no one to teach her; Angela could only count, and Maria Robinet, who knew everything, had acquired it by hearsay. Madam Princess began to look for a governess; but meanwhile good M. Beau, the former instructor of the Dragomirs, was in the household every day.

He had now retired from teaching, but without changing his habits. Every evening at the hour when street-lamps are lighted, he came to the Rookery. Madam Princess received him beside the rosewood table, where her sons had studied their lessons in former days. Outside, the lamplighter passed by in his blue smock, with his pole slung over his shoulder. The little parlour, being just on a level with the lamp, was lighted at the expense of the municipality. Madam

Princess had formed such economical habits, that during the hour before dinner she was content with this borrowed light, which was just enough for her knitting. Her agile fingers continued their former work, but, as her boys had no further need of her stockings, she unravelled each of them as soon as it was finished, and began another. M. Beau had come with something more than gossip ; he also brought his heart, which was laid at her feet. He would stay an hour, then take his leave, after greeting poor Marie on her bed of pain. He had watched her grow ; now she was wasting away before his eyes. M. Beau was artless enough to explain his daily attendance by the interest he took in his former pupils. Part of his spiritual posterity was scattered in that outermost Roman province which he still called by its old name : *Dacia Felix*. Madam Princess would read him the letters of her children. Together they would hold long conversations about these sons of his spirit, the only descendants he would ever have. Ugly beyond words and crippled besides, M. Beau had renounced women for the just Muses as soon as he reached the age of choice—or rather, the age of being chosen. Too poor to be a husband and too crippled to be a priest, he had become a professor. But he had lost none of the infirmities which had kept him from saying mass ; and, when he painfully climbed to the lecturer's platform for the first time, he was greeted with such an outburst of laughter that he immediately wished to descend from his place. This happened in the old academy of Dijon, his native town. He left for Paris, so as to lose himself in a crowd so vast, so absent-minded, so preoccupied, that it forgot to snicker at the passage of a cripple. He had recommendations and university friends ; he no longer

sought to lecture in public. He was soon engaged as a tutor by several foreign families, and notably by the Dragomirs. From that day, he fell in love without knowing it, and still without knowing it after thirty-four years, he was as lovesick as before. This exile from Cythera was content with that which he had, like the blessed in the Scriptures, for he had his heart's desire. Every day M. Beau saw Princess Dragomir, and the privilege was his alone; for no other man entered the home of this voluntary hermit. There was indeed the annual visit of Prince Jon, but although it was as violent as a cyclone, it was almost as brief. M. Beau hardly had time to wonder at his discomfort before it was over. This family was his, as the Holy Family was Maria Robinet's. But the Virgin had borne a daughter instead of a son, and St. Anne smiled on her female descendants. When Catherine, for the first time, climbed on his uneven knees, he felt dimly that he loved God in three persons: the mother, the daughter, and the granddaughter.

M. Beau, who was a professor of history and philosophy, a doctor of law, and a bachelor of letters, brought his knowledge to the level of little Catherine. From all the masterpieces he knew, he chose the alphabet, which contains the others, and taught it to his pupil. Having learnt the letters, she stumbled over the words; finally she could read. He gave her an elementary history of France, which she was to learn word for word like a prayer. She said: "Our ancestors the Gauls . . ." She was wrong about her ancestry, but M. Beau refrained from pointing out her mistake. Soon they were together from morning till night. He would take her walking in the Champs-Élysées. Since Catherine had an

instructor instead of an instructress, she found no playmates among the other little girls. Usually such friendships are due to the nurses and governesses, who visit back and forth in the open air ; the children merely imitate their elders. Catherine, having no childhood friends, did very well without them. The cripple and the lovely child strolled on by themselves, under the great trees. In front of the little booths they would stop to muse, while M. Beau took out his pocket-book. Catherine could buy all she wanted : balloons, skipping-ropes, tops, barley-sugar, but especially tops ! She delivered herself body and soul to these vertiginous toys. Her tutor, from an iron bench, would admire her. Using a whip with a long eel-skin lash, which she wound like a serpent round her top, she would spin it with a sure hand, whipping it again and again and crying : "Dance, my sabot ; sing, my top !" It whirled desperately, humming all the while, and the more she whipped it, the more it sang. When her arm grew tired, the top also would waver, totter, threaten to die. . . . Then the child, to revive it, would attack it furiously, and often succeed in bringing it back to life. M. Beau nodded his head with a satisfied air. He referred to this dishevelled Catherine, whipping her top, as "my little Fury." He would often interrupt their walk with philosophic anecdotes. At other times, this improvised nursemaid would take her to the puppet theatre, find her a seat in the first row, and stand behind her. The pummelling given the sergeant of police by Punch and Judy was a first lesson in disrespect, and one which delighted all the children of Paris. Here it was that Catherine learnt to laugh at the gendarme, and acquired those two wholesome defects of the French people, malice and curiosity, both of which are essential to its greatness.

Sundays, they continued their walk to the Tuileries. Poor Marie was also taken there, as soon as the weather turned warm. She was installed in a sheltered spot known as Little Provence, where, against an ivy-covered wall, children, nursemaids, parents, and grandparents formed a living hedge.

On such occasions, a veritable expedition was required. First, Ma^dam Princess and Marie would climb into their ancient hired landau, with shawls. Angela next, in a cab, would shoot off like an arrow. The two ladies were terrified at crossing the Place de la Concorde ; and therefore it was left to the cook, as she crouched in her vehicle among the blankets, parasols, and folding stools, to make a breach through traffic. M. Beau and Catherine would follow bravely on foot through the Champs-Élysées. On the way they would be sure to encounter the goat-cart. Catherine, climbing into it, would ride to the last of the chestnut trees, in front of the Horses of Marly. As he limped by her side, M. Beau would tell her the story of Napoleon's son, the King of Rome, who had succeeded little Louis XVII in the goat-cart. She learnt the dauphins of France before learning the kings. M. Beau, professor of history, took Catherine on a journey through the past. In the Place de la Concorde, he showed her pikes and pikemen where now there were only gas-lamps ; the hum of traffic was the rolling drums of Santerre's National Guard ; water flowed from the fountain which still washes the blood of Louis XVI ; if a pigeon came flying on its way from the Palais Bourbon to the Madeleine, it was the soul of the martyred king returning to the skies. The Obelisk was like the style of the Parisian sun-dial ; it told the hours to the cities of France, the statues of which surround

it in a circle. Marie Antoinette, on her arrival from Vienna, had leaned from the balcony of the Ministry of Marine. Near by, at the Hôtel Crillon, a body was hanging—that of the brave soldier to whom Henry IV had written: “Hang yourself, brave Crillon! We have beaten the foe at Arques, and you were not there.” Of all the sculptured cities, Strasbourg was the only one which seemed to live, being covered with violet moire, tri-coloured ribbons, and torn crape. At the gilded gate of the Tuileries, between a charming Mercury riding sideways on his winged horse, and Fame blowing her trumpet, Angela’s hack was waiting as if for Louis Philippe, after his deposition. Finally, the child and her tutor would reach Little Provence, where they found the two ladies already installed: the grandmother knitting, the mother idle, like all those on whom death is at work. Soon tired of resting, Catherine the Second would run to the boat-woman, whose flotilla rested in dry-dock under the trees. M. Beau would run after her, dragging his lame foot and carrying a chair. At the edge of the great basin where children launch their boats, which always upset, he continued to instruct her. To her little schooner with angelic wings, he gave the name of *La Belle Poule*, to commemorate a victorious frigate the image of which Marie Antoinette had worn in her hair in the days when she was a patriot.

“It was here,” said M. Beau, pointing to the centre of the octagonal basin, “that the former artificers of the king placed a Hydra of Tyranny. It was made of tow, and was a very striking resemblance. Robespierre set fire to it, during the festival of Reason. . . .”

Thus, as she played in the gardens, Catherine was nourished with French history and mythology. She

read the Tuileries like an open book. At half-past four, she would gather the crumbs of her lunch and run toward the Louvre, which loomed on the horizon, blue as a chain of mountains. She knew that the Arch of the Carrousel, between the Tuileries and the Louvre, was an aviary crowded with birds. The sculptured Victories peeped and chirped. She would throw scraps of bread to the glorious sparrows which nest among the eagles.

M. Beau, having become the guardian of a totally new imagination, gradually imbued it with a tradition which was his own. He changed Catherine's past. By giving her a French memory, he triumphed in secret over the alien generations of her ancestors. He drew her to himself by teaching her history, which is a sort of immortality turned upside-down. Her life stretched backwards through ten centuries. All the deeds she remembered as if she had seen them herself, were French deeds. It was because of Philippe Auguste that Paris was clean under her little feet. She was grateful not only to this king, but to all those who had improved the city, for having built the pavements on which she played; she felt that from Clovis to Baron Haussmann, she owed something to each of them. Being subject to metamorphoses like all children—who, in the course of their play, become horses or locomotives, Robinson Crusoes or Leather Stockings—Catherine, whose imagination turned to history, was Roland at Roncevaux, Joan of Arc, St. Genevieve watching over Paris, and Bara the drummer-boy. She identified herself with all the characters whose lives she read. Like Joan the goodly maid, she was burnt in Rouen; under a tree in Italy, like Bayard, she watched her blood pour out through a hundred wounds; like Francis I, she was taken

prisoner at Pavia. She had the sort of impartiality which distinguishes Epinal prints : she took the side of everybody, violently. She wept burning tears over Louis XVII, the little prisoner of the Temple. She screamed : "Long live the Emperor !" In wooden shoes, with an old flint-lock in her hand, she rushed off to defend the republican frontiers. And, on the fourteenth of July, she made M. Beau purchase the whole stock of a balloon-merchant in the Tuileries. Having borrowed a pair of scissors from the old woman that rented chairs, they cut the strings, and one by one, plucked these fabulous grapes from the bunch. They soared, red and blue, into the white sky. This child of Rumanian princes was delivering the captive balloons, as a sign of rejoicing over the fall of the Bastille.

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When she was twelve, she learnt to be homesick for Paris. Her mother, to breathe her last, required an even milder air than that of Little Provence. The doctors chose Arcachon, on the south-west coast. There, under the salubrious pines, in the midst of the sad undergrowth, the family rented one of those worm-eaten villas which serve as a next-to-last dwelling for invalids. Catherine soon felt the pangs of exile. She thought with regret of everything in the Rookery : the good odours, the bad odours, the lamplighter, and even the taste of bread, which is different in Paris from anywhere else in the world. Marie saw her distress, and felt that she was leaving a double heritage : not only the love of the city, but the means to satisfy that love. Spurred on by death, she had only a little time in which to persuade the orphan that she would be happy. She said with a

convincing air of mystery that Catherine had been brought into the world for that purpose. Then she spoke once more, in an artless way, of the visions which preceded Catherine's birth. The little girl stood listening as her dying mother whispered, with a caress which was only of the voice and of the eyes, "You that are my own life, shall live in Paris. . . ."

When the end was near, they took Catherine away. For a second time, they shielded her from knowledge of the punishment destined for the flesh from which she sprang. Joyously she returned with M. Beau to the Rookery, where she was to wait for her mother and grandmother. One morning as Maria Robinet was drawing back the curtains, she said in a colourless voice: "Madam is in Heaven." Catherine joined her hands, knelt beside the old servant, and prayed to die, so that she might be with her mother. However, Maria Robinet reproved her, pouring forth the convictions of a solid faith: Catherine would surely die, and would surely join her mother in Heaven, if she obeyed God's commandments. Thereupon the little girl wept still more bitterly at the thought of departing from life.

They took her to the Russian church in the Rue Daru, which she had never seen. She had always thought that she belonged to St. Philip's parish; now at last, she had to be told that instead of being Catholic, she was Greek Orthodox. Facing the golden screen that concealed God, she was made to kneel beside a long box heaped with mimosa. The yellow flowers suggested Arcachon; and their smell, which was mingled with that of incense, made her sick at heart. What had they put in this wooden chest? Was it her mother? At most it could only be her mother's clothes. In a low voice she repeated the

words of Maria Robinet: "Madam is in Heaven!" as if to convince herself. Standing in one of the stalls, between her grandfather Prince Jon, who had arrived the night before, and an unknown uncle called Charles-Adolphe, she listened in tearless astonishment to an unknown ritual, chanted by wise men of the East whose long beards swept their golden vestments. She was taken back to the Rookery without having understood a word of the services.

Next morning as the clocks were striking six, she stole off with her grandmother to St. Philip's, to hear a low mass which Maria Robinet was having said for the soul of her young mistress; and as Angela the cook was weeping, they all wept. M. Beau also was there. It was in this church that the funeral services for Marie Romulesco really took place, although there were neither flowers nor a coffin.

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From the day when Catherine lost her mother, Uncle Charles-Adolphe entered her life. It was said, somewhat vaguely, that he came from the Latin Quarter, where he had been completing his studies for the last forty years. The existence of this bohemian relative, the elder brother of Constantine Romulesco, was known in the Rookery, but the family had never caught sight of him. He was an eccentric who lived his own life and had quarrelled with his family. Marie, who knew his story, had remembered him in writing her will. She had made him Catherine's guardian—the one available method for saving the child from the tyranny of Prince Jon. She wished her daughter to be free, and to marry whomever she pleased. Marie had never forgotten the violence with which she herself had been torn from young Philipon.

In matters of social independence, Uncle Charles-Adolphe offered the best of guarantees. His wife, now dead for many years, was a person whose mother had kept a boarding house in the Latin Quarter. He would give free rein to his ward, having taken it himself—did he not speak of himself, in letters to his family, as a Bachelor of Licence and a Master of Liberties? He would permit them all, except for poetic licences, and those which bad writers take with grammar; Uncle Charles-Adolphe was a purist as well as a free-thinker. However, though strong of mind, he was feeble in health, and his rebellious life was modest and orderly. His revolt was of long standing. He had left the lower Danube at an early age, in obedience to his father, who was sending him to Paris to complete his education. His scholastic record was brilliant—so brilliant, indeed, that he dreamt only of pursuing his studies. When his family called him home, writing that it was time to begin his career, he refused; he was not through learning. His disobedience led to the customary punishment for this sort of crime; he was left without money. He earned a little by working for a bookseller, whose accounts he kept. Thus he provided for his chief needs, which were reading and conversation. His Sundays were spent in rummaging through the bookstalls along the *quais*; and when his father died, his love for the Latin Quarter was still his ruling passion. He exchanged his estates in Wallachia for an income to be furnished by his brothers. His birthright was sold for a library.

He established himself on the Left Bank, no longer in a furnished room, but among his books in an apartment of his own. There, just around the corner from the Luxembourg, he lived as a humble lover of the

Muses. The name Romulesco was a sonorous confession of his foreign birth ; it troubled him. To make it less alien, he amputated the first two syllables and spelt the remainder in the French fashion : Lescaut. He was simply M. Lescaut to his concierge, to his Voltairian friends of the public libraries, and to waiters in cafés of the Left Bank. With such a guardian, Catherine would have nothing to fear : Paris was hers, the Paris of men who delight in old texts, crowd the National Library, and run into debt with the booksellers. The new Philipon might come if he chose !

Catherine had a second professor now : her uncle the grammarian. At first he saw her once a week, for pleasure ; but soon he was coming every day, for work. He taught her to enjoy the beauty, logic, and absurdities of Larive and Fleury's "Grammar". He took her to the Luxembourg, where they strolled beneath the trees and discussed irregular verbs. He signed his letters, "Your rich uncle," and promised to leave her his unabridged copy of Littré's "Dictionary". He corrected her compositions with a threat : "Let me find a single neologism and I'll cut you out of my will !" Henceforth Catherine would be guided by two masters, the classical uncle and the romantic M. Beau, who contended with each other for her mind. Like bees, they pollenized her budding intellect with the treasures of their knowledge. She studied the humanities in their school. She learnt Greek, Latin, prosody, and logic, as if she were born like Héloïse to a clerkly family, or like Marguerite de Valois to a line of kings. She received the sacred teachings reserved for men. Her charming head would be formed before her body.

CHAPTER IV

One Can't Marry a City

CATHERINE'S adolescence, like spring-time in Paris, was both early and prolonged. In knowledge, she grew rapidly; her intelligence developed like the larvæ of bees, the sex of which is determined by their food; thus, when Catherine was admitted to the men's table, she made herself a man. In appearance, however, she long remained a child. She was taught by two good masters, but she was being cared for by three old women. Madam Princess and the aged servants clothed, fed, and coddled her as if she would never grow up. Precocious to those who listened and backward to those who merely looked, Catherine read Homer, wrote commentaries on Tacitus, translated Virgil, and continued to be dressed in pinafores and kissed by the cook. Even after her fifteenth birthday, she would sit every evening on the little stool by her grandmother's feet. There she would listen while M. Beau read tirelessly from Chateaubriand's "*Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*". In this proud winding-sheet, woven of passionate lies, he clothed the love he was too timid to reveal. His heart spoke to the old Princess in this borrowed voice. And when, closing his eyes, he declaimed: "The long-established habits of his love, so necessary to life!" his own voice trembled. As she listened, Catherine's imagination took fire without taking a definite shape. She loved René and the Sylph at an age when most girls love only a

chum, or a chum's brother. She was Amélie ; she was Atala ; she crooned the death-song of Chactas ; and, like the daughters of Muscogulgee warriors as described by Chateaubriand, she examined into the state of her heart : "They asked me whether I had seen a white doe in my dreams, and whether the trees of the secret valley had counselled me to love. . . ." Meanwhile, as antidote to her romanticism, she read Montaigne, La Bruyère, Montesquieu, and even a few pages of Rabelais with Uncle Charles-Adolphe. He cauterized her memory with those fiery particles which are the "Maxims" of La Rochefoucauld. Along with Diderot and d'Alembert, she became a rationalist ; she summarized Voltaire's "*Essai sur les Mœurs*" ; and she continued each night to be tucked in bed by Maria Robinet, who made her repeat the evening prayer. They would sigh in unison : "My God, I believe in You ! My God, I trust in You ! My God, I love You with all my heart !" Her atheism of the morning did not interfere with her prayer at night. . . . Her skirts were growing shorter as her legs grew longer. She was sent out to stretch them, when lessons were over, in the little courtyard behind Mme Fenouil's lodge. There she played with Rose, the wineseller's daughter, and Antoinette, the grandchild of the concierge. If grace can be taught, Catherine learnt hers from these children of the people. All three together, they would skip rope and count in a singsong voice : "One, two, buckle my shoe. . . ." From the window where the caged canaries sang, Angela kept her eyes on them.

On summer Thursdays, guided by her professor of history, she toured Paris as if it were Rome, visiting all its churches and even descending into its catacombs. On winter Sundays her guardian would take her

to the national theatres, where she learnt the theory of the passions as practised in masterpieces. Already M. Beau and Uncle Charles-Adolphe, growing conscious of their rivalry, had tacitly formed an agreement ; they each respected the prerogatives of the other with good faith and ill-humour. Catherine was to attend *Hernani* and other romantic dramas with her tutor, while her classical guardian would take her to the tragedies of Corneille and Racine. It was the same with works of art and even with towns ; they divided the field : she went to the Cluny Museum with one, to the Louvre with the other ; Vaux and Versailles were in her uncle's province, but not Meaux, Senlis, and Saint-Denis, with their abbeys and cathedrals. M. Beau was her churchwarden.

She shared their enthusiasms by turn, sometimes following one and sometimes the other. Wavering between two attitudes, she ended by acquiring moderation. Her mind was being sharpened. No longer merely a pupil, she became an arbiter ; already she reigned over both of them as if by natural right. There was only one subject on which the rival pedagogues were agreed, and that was the education of her modesty. The libertine helped the anchorite to Bowdlerize her reading. Such as she heard them, the erotic myths which clung to palaces and gardens, and the passions of Greek gods or kings of France, left her only with a frozen enthusiasm, a cerebral sort of love which lulled the senses. Her mental activity encouraged this slumber. And her two professors vied with each other in deepening her ignorance ; they had no desire to explain the mystery which no man reveals to his daughter. Filled with the holy fear which virgins inspire, they proceeded as if they were training a Vestal.

At fifteen, something inexplicable happened to Catherine : she thought herself wounded, she thought herself dead. Her fear was succeeded by a mysterious feeling of shame. Maria Robinet, who had undertaken the task of teaching Catherine life, bent over her with an austere face, and said gravely : "It is the original sin." And then, to console her : "It is also the proof that the good Lord will send you children, miss, when you are grown and married." Henceforth this thought was always in Catherine's mind : she would bear fruit, like the Woman blessed among all women, to whom she prayed at night. And what she had just seen was a token of the new heart which would be formed in her body, like fruits within the calyx of a flower. But she believed, in all good faith, that a bridal robe sufficed to create the state of marriage ; had she not seen blossoming cherry trees in the vale of Montmorency ?

That same year, she put up her hair and began to wear skirts which fell to the ankles. It was in the autumn of 1904. She was now attending morning lectures at the Sorbonne and evening classes at the Collège de France. At seventeen she caught measles, the only disease from which she would ever suffer. Beginning in February, it passed with the March showers. One spring day Catherine went strolling through the streets in a hat she would always remember. It seemed for the first time that all the passers-by were friends of hers. They watched her approaching with a smile, with a look of surprise, with an insistence which changed into persistence as soon as she had passed. The bright sun was at her back. On the shining asphalt at her feet, she could see the shadows of the men that turned to watch her. She was seized with a sudden joy ; it seemed to her that she had

nothing but friends in the world. This feeling of being introduced to a whole city made her enjoy walking, adore the spring fashions, and worship the spring. Indeed, she herself resembled the interminable springtime of Paris, where the chestnut-trees and elms bear leaves in March and keep them tender as a silken scarf till June.

On Sundays, when she went rummaging for books with Uncle Charles-Adolphe, among the boxes that line the charming banks of the Seine and open like oysters in the sun, they seemed unable to stop without attracting a sudden throng of customers. First one man would approach, then two; enthusiastic heads bent forward to examine the book which Catherine was holding; other hands took hold of it the moment she let it fall. Uncle Charles-Adolphe was jostled and lost his footing in the crowd. Furious, he led his pupil away before he had driven a bargain for the "*Héroïdes et Pièces Fugitives*" of Jean Dorat, in a dull calf binding hardly damaged by the mice. Another time he exhumed a collection of Boilly's lithographs from a pile of dirty boxes. He was suddenly horrified to find that a young workman, who stood beside Catherine, was reading the title of one drawing in a loud voice: "When I see you, my heart goes pit-a-pat!" And the crowd had begun to laugh. Uncle Charles-Adolphe seized his niece and dragged her away. Philosopher though he was, he bewailed the effects of Catherine in spite of loving their cause; and henceforth he would abandon a pleasurable search to which he had devoted every fair Sunday for the last thirty-five years.

M. Beau met with similar adventures when he waited with Catherine for an omnibus, or stood with her in line before the box office of the Odéon. His

ambition had always been to pass unnoticed, but now his club-foot and his hump were being paraded in the company of a girl at whom everybody stared. Soon fear came stealing into the hearts of the old schoolmasters who had become her bodyguard. She was too beautiful for them to keep. Ravishing, she was certain to be ravished ; a husband would come to steal her away. Where ? How ? . . . They could not answer these questions, but meanwhile, like old surly dogs, they stood watch against the foe.

Only Madam Princess, who had kept to the house since the death of Marie, was ignorant that her granddaughter had become a public danger. She continued to regard her merely as the child of her child. By sitting hunched on a little stool at her feet, Catherine helped to preserve this illusion. The thought of finding a husband for her little girl had not yet entered the grandmother's mind. Had it ever occurred, it would have been fearfully embarrassing. She had no relatives or social connections in Paris ; or at least she had been acting, these forty years, as if she had neither.

Long ago, when she accepted poverty with a calm soul, she had sworn not to reveal it to her friends, and still less to the half-dozen relatives of the Dragomirs in Paris. She was too discerning not to know that the more brilliant are one's connections, the more brilliantly one must live to maintain them, failing which they vanish. It is true that certain families have pick-thank relatives, who are content in their poverty to revolve like satellites. Madam Princess, who was poor by choice and not by accident, had no intention of playing such a part. Neither she nor her children would ever describe the least little orbit round those old mansions of the Rue de Grenelle

and the Rue Saint-Dominique where cousins of theirs led the existence of planets. In years past, Prince Jon had endeavoured to place his wife under the supervision of these distant near-relatives. But the Princess had proved intractable in the matter of visits. She made none whatsoever. A woman with nine children and only two servants could rely on her sons to undo by day whatever she accomplished at night. "I am the Penelope of woollen stockings," she used to say, as she pointed to her overflowing work-basket. And she never withdrew her refusal.

Thus, Catherine lacked those brilliant connections which make it possible to acquire others. It was not until after her engagement that she heard of her great-aunts Montgiron, Commaille, and La Feuillade, and her cousins d'Entragues and de Dombes. As for Uncle Charles-Adolphe, his only friends were poor old students like himself, still thirsty for knowledge in spite of their age. He frequented no salons; a bookshop took their place. It was time for another Philipon to appear, if there had been another Philipon.

But poor Marie, who thought that her daughter's story would be a happier version of her own, had forgotten that Catherine lacked brothers. As a result, there were no schoolboys large or small to pay her visits on Sunday and write sonnets in her honour. She might perhaps have lost her heart to one of the talkative, witty, and impassioned young Frenchmen who were then attending the Lycée Louis-le-Grand or the Collège Stanislas, but she had no means whatever of making their acquaintance. Once again it was being proved that love stories never repeat themselves, and that mothers are silly to think of themselves as living again in their daughters.

When Catherine was eighteen, her only suitor was

the city of Paris, her only social life was in the streets, and, like the young women of the French Revolution, she appeared only at public ceremonies. When the crowd cheered its heroes, she was there. She had seen the streets lighted and the skies filled with rockets in honour of the Russian alliance. She had cried, "Hurrah for Kruger!" on the boulevards during the Boer War. She had helped to open the Exhibition of 1900. From the top rungs of a ladder she had watched the mid-Lent processions and the arrival of visiting monarchs. At last the time had come to make her own triumphal entry. Unfortunately, she did not know the names of the new friends she was always meeting, and though all of them smiled at her, their faces were never the same. Instead of one proposal she had a thousand, of the sort that are made by the eyes and refused by the eyes. A thousand admirers, however, are not the same as a match. One can't marry a city, after all.

CHAPTER V

This Galley in the Seine . . .

BETWEEN her grandmother the hermit, and her two unapproachable guards, Catherine had every chance of remaining single for years, if not for ever. Except for Uncle Charles-Adolphe and M. Beau, no one believed she could possibly find a husband before her twentieth birthday. Yet the impossible occurred, the husband was found, and the worst fears of her teachers were realized. Of this event, they were not only the prophets but the agents; they were victims of their own prophecy. It was under their very eyes that she was stolen away. Nay more: they even guided her to ruin. It almost seemed that they had conspired against her. They were standing guard together, which happened rarely; she had two defenders the day that she was lost. Unwittingly, they had taken her into the house of her abductor. Each of them spurred on by his own hobby—Uncle Charles-Adolphe by his love of old books, and M. Beau by his passion for antiquities—they had led her through the doors which would later prevail against them.

According to the invitation, there was to be a reception on the twenty-third of April, nineteen hundred and seven, at the home of Countess Leopolska, in the Hôtel Leopolski, on the Ile Saint-Louis. The reception would be followed by the auction of a thousand rare books, recently bequeathed to the

Polish Library. The committee in charge had decided to exchange these luxuries for necessities, by purchasing useful books with the proceeds of the sale. Invitations were thereupon distributed by the Paris Society of Polish Students.

Now, it happened that one of these engraved cards, on which shone the winged lions of the Leopolskis, had been sent to M. Beau at his old address in the Rue Gît-le-Cœur. The retired professor had left that neighbourhood years before, and had taken lodgings in the Rue de Ponthieu, so as to be nearer the Rookery. The letter might have been lost, or the invitation might have gone unnoticed; it reached him by a miracle and was accepted by another. Moreover, he decided to extend it to Catherine, who in turn extended it to her uncle the bibliophile. The handwriting on the envelope was that of Abbé Mésange, a Burgundian colleague of M. Beau, who had taught like him in a foreign family, and, after being the Leopolskis' tutor for many years, had become their librarian. The auction itself was public. It was taking place in a mansion which dated from 1659, as M. Beau was proud to inform his companions. He added that François Le Vau had been its architect. It stood at the western tip of the Island, which, with the Hôtel Czartoryski as its poop and the Hôtel Leopolski as its prow, lay hugely moored like a galley in the Seine.

"Why did we go there, anyhow?" Catherine's unfortunate guardian would ask when it was too late. In the days when he took his niece on book-hunting expeditions along the *quais*, they had often looked toward the Ile Saint-Louis. At the point where the Quai d'Alençon drives its rectangle of stone into the river, they had seen this many-windowed mansion

gleaming over the waters like a ship's lantern. In its windows, curtained behind the trees which grow so tall in this neighbourhood, the Seine was mirrored. The house itself was a mill without a millstone, a castle for Melusine, a building made like a water-clock to see the time flow by. A pensive face, it watched the water gliding under the bridges. In plan it was simply an A ; its walls were bare ; its angles were exactly those of the river-banks. As if it were made to see and not to be seen, it carried only one mark of identification : a centaur prancing in a gilt medallion. Guide-books described it as the House of the Centaur.

On the day when Catherine was to enter this mansion, she first saw it shining at the very edge of the horizon. Reaching the Quai aux Fleurs, she spied its windows gleaming through the tremulous leaves of the aspens. M. Beau and Uncle Charles-Adolphe were studying the catalogue. Crossing the bridge of St. Louis, they fell to discussing the merits of Le Vau ; they tried to compute the number of transformations which his work had undergone since it first rose from the ground. Drawing still nearer, they admired the window-railings, while M. Beau informed his pupil that they dated from the Directory ; they represented four arrows buried in a heart. They entered the doorway among the crowd of bibliophiles, most of whom were old men with rounded backs. The spiral draught that blew in the stairway of honour was almost as much assistance as the banister to those who laboured up the steps. M. Beau, panting, said that they dated from 1659. On the threshold of a great salon from which the gilt was peeling, Catherine stopped. The sunlight was playing over the Seine, throwing little dancing shadows on the

ceiling. Above the eager heads of the buyers, the sky, the trees, and the water shone through the colourless panes. Catherine went almost running toward an open window, as if someone outside had called her. She put her hands on the railing. She was so enthralled by the beauty of the river that she seemed to be fondling it, and to be fondled in return. There were footsteps beside her which she did not hear. A stranger was approaching. Finding that the view was engrossing her, he wished to substitute himself for the landscape. He spoke in order to turn her rapt attention to himself: "Mademoiselle!"

He said that she was soiling her gloves. He said that the window-railings were covered with soot from the tugboats. In a soft voice he said no matter what, merely to draw those magnificent glances toward himself. It was his right to speak to her; she was in his house. She had come with two shabby old men. Who in the devil could she be? A pupil of the Conservatory, perhaps? A princess out of Racine, born by a miracle in the back rooms of a grocery? Taking his handkerchief, he began wiping the soot from the railing, the arrows, and the heart, so that she could lean against them without soiling her dress. Catherine accepted these courtesies; the stranger had succeeded in attracting her attention. Turning her eyes from the Seine, she stared at him. Her first impression was that he wore a look of sadness. Then, leaning her elbows once more on the window-railing, she let him lean beside her. They heard the clocks strike four. He told her the names of the different chimes: St. Gervais, St. Louis-in-the-Isle, the Palais de Justice, the Hôtel de Ville, and finally the slowest, Notre Dame.

M. Beau, lost in the crowd, was talking with Abbé Mésange and staring at the ceiling. This, too, was

a work of art ; painted by Le Brun about 1675, it had been retouched in the reign of Louis XVIII. Exhilarated by the smell of old bindings, Uncle Charles-Adolphe had taken off his glasses better to inspect the books ; his weak vision was an excuse for holding them close to his face and sniffing at them voluptuously. His eyes being myopic, he read with his nose. However, he was the first to see Catherine in danger. Wishing to show her an almost unobtainable edition of the "*Deipnosophistæ*", he looked for her among the tables where the books were displayed. Not finding her, he concluded that they had been separated by the crowd. Perhaps she was in one of the neighbouring rooms, making a tour of inspection with M. Beau. Putting on his black-ribboned glasses, Uncle Charles-Adolphe rushed after her. In a doorway he ran full tilt into his pedagogic rival, who was busy examining an ornamental lock—designed in 1798 by Jean-Michel Moreau. He asked for his niece, received no answer, sowed his anxiety broadcast, reaped it, retraced his steps, and finally discovered Catherine talking with a stranger. At this, Uncle Charles-Adolphe turned purple with rage, and adjusting his pince-nez for battle, rushed headlong on the foe. He was determined to scold his niece roundly and take her away. Just then a tugboat passed, filling the air with the screech of its siren. Catherine put her fingers to her ears. The young man, skilled in social manœuvres, had disappeared. He found Abbé Mésange, was introduced by him to M. Beau, and returned with both of them a moment later. He was now presented successively to the uncle and the niece as Count Adam Leopolski.

Sometimes a social formula has a miraculous effect. Three words, in this case, were enough to transform

a stranger into an acquaintance. Once spoken, they left her guardians with neither force nor argument to prevent Count Adam Leopolski from speaking to Catherine Romulesco. There are names which convey no meaning to a stranger, and these, perhaps, are the most honourable. Others have the force of an incantation : they speak of countries, rivers, battles ; they evoke the dead. As soon as his name had been pronounced, the heir of the Leopolskis fell gracefully silent, and let the sorrows of Poland speak for him. Little more was required to rouse the sympathy of his hearers. Leopolski and Czartoryski, to Parisian ears, are the names of two old mansions on the Ile Saint-Louis where noble exiles await the re-birth of their country, and meanwhile sit watching the water flow under the bridges. Catherine, who had an historical imagination, thought she knew why this young man full of strength and beauty had such a downcast air. She said to herself : "He is a Pole !"

"Susanna and the elders !" thought Adam after hearing their names, which were unfamiliar. That of Romulesco was indeed noble, but it bore the same relation to Leopolski that branch lines bear to a transcontinental express. Except in the Danubian lands, where the family had been of public service toward the end of the eighteenth century, it was totally unknown. The case was not the same with the Dragomirs. Political misfortunes had led to the temporary exile of the family, which was rich in well-dowered daughters and consequently rich in relatives by marriage. It had connections in France, Italy, Austria, and even England. If Catherine had borne her mother's name instead of her father's there is no doubt that Adam Leopolski, for whom the "*Almanach*

de Gotha" held no secrets, would have recognized her immediately as a dangerous girl—the sort one has to marry. Being misled, however, by the shabbiness of her companions, he continued to believe that he was talking to some lovely young actress, accompanied either by her managers or by her country uncle and her music-teacher. He therefore felt at liberty to indulge in all the follies to which he was inspired by his sudden desire. As for his look of melancholy which Catherine had confused with patriotic despair, it had been only the sadness of the senses, the ancient mask of libertines.

The auction was about to begin. Having arranged that Uncle Charles-Adolphe should attend it with Abbé Mésange, Adam himself took Catherine and M. Beau for a tour of the mansion, and finally led them to the roof in order to enjoy the famous view. The Seine like a ribbon of watered silk, the majestic embankments, the horizon of the Capets, all seemed the domain of this lord whose castle was the centre of them all. But he showed that he preferred Catherine to all his possessions, by never lifting his eyes from her face. His unceasing stare seemed to question her. What was he asking? She could not have said; and yet, since he was making a mute and continuous request, her slightest glance toward him became a sort of reply. He seemed almost like a beggar, having assumed those humble airs which alone are truly seductive. In his manners toward women, he showed the eager timidity of a slave. Although his sudden servility was the result of his strongest instinct, it seemed terrifying and sinister because of his inborn pride. He revenged himself elsewhere by his insolence toward men. When at last he conducted his young guest to the door, he bowed very low. He was resolved

that this parting should lead to a more profitable meeting.

Catherine left the Hôtel Leopolski with the easy conscience of one who has just been making charitable visits to the poor. She retained an agreeable feeling of benevolence. Because of her unfamiliar joy, she had the sort of winged grace which makes people speak of walking on air. Her two guardians plodded beside her. Uncle Charles-Adolphe, loaded with books, was discontented without knowing why. M. Beau, loaded with infirmities and historical data, was hardly more satisfied. Turning westward, they followed the *quais* of the Left Bank. They hailed a cab on reaching the Rue des Ursins, but the driver was bound for the stable and refused to stop. At this moment, Adam Leopolski appeared in his automobile. He had watched them from his window, and having seen the route which they were taking, had pursued them without hesitation. He stopped at the kerb and offered to drive them home. Catherine's joy was keen. She had never ridden in a horseless carriage. Uncle Charles-Adolphe, fearful of catching cold and unfriendly to modern inventions, began by refusing the offer. But Catherine looked as she did at the age of seven when she wished to ride in the goat-cart, and M. Beau could never resist that look. The satyr realized that he must abduct not only the nymph but her two guardians as well. Becoming insistent, he reminded M. Beau that there were no cabs on the embankment at this hour, assured Uncle Charles-Adolphe that he would drive slowly, promised Catherine to drive fast, and finally enticed all three of them into the car. Having become their chauffeur, Adam Leopolski naturally asked for their address, learnt that it was No. 14, Rue Matignon, and felt that he had made a

step in advance. The automobile drove off at what seemed a reckless speed to its new occupants. The abduction took place in the dusk. Paris was grey as ashes; the street-lamps passed like sparks; the windows glowed like embers. Floating headlong on this ashen torrent, Uncle Charles-Adolphe cried: "Not so fast!" M. Beau remarked to the wind that Chateaubriand had prophesied automobiles a hundred years in advance, and that he called them "wandering boilers". Catherine was laughing with joy; she held her two hands to her hat and resembled some cliffside flower assaulted by the winds of the sea. They crossed the Seine. On the Bridge of Arcola, the wind veered, Catherine loosened her grip, and the flowered hat soared into the air. It fell into the whirling water between the piers of the bridge; for a moment it seemed to mark the place where Ophelia sank under the waves. Adam Leopolski stopped the car, made touching excuses, offered Catherine his muffler, shifted into low gear, and decided that the lost hat was an opportunity which he would not neglect. When they reached the Rue Matignon, a glance at her house completely reassured him; Catherine lived in an old building which bore the marks of poverty.

Early next morning the alarm was given: a heavy smell of flowers invaded the Rookery. A servant in livery gave a gigantic basket to Maria Robinet, whose arms sank under the burden. In the basket, hidden under roses, was a cardboard box containing a hat and a letter. The letter was addressed to Catherine, but it was Madam Princess who opened it and wrote the reply. She curtly explained that she was sending the flowers, the letter, and the hat back to their donor. She signed this note with her full name.

When Adam Leopolski read the signature, he

thought he was losing his mind. He rushed off to see his aunt La Feuillade, *née* Dragomir. He was sure that Catherine's grandmother had merely stolen this name. Considering the appearance of the house, he had every right to expect that Catherine, if not illegitimate, would at least be the daughter of some broken-down adventuress. The Dragomirs, however, were very rich, as was known all over Europe. . . . Meanwhile the Duchess de la Feuillade was out of the city, and her porter announced that she was staying in the south till the Sunday after Easter.

Adam in desperation sought Abbé Mésange, and sent him to gather information from M. Beau. It was only when the Abbé returned that Adam learnt the worst : namely, that the lady who lived at No. 14, Rue Matignon was indeed Princess Dragomir, the daughter of the last hospodar of Moldavia and the legitimate wife of Prince Jon, from whom she was not even divorced. She lived in Paris by choice, and in retirement by taste. Her granddaughter lived with her. There was not a trace of irregularity in Catherine's birth certificate, nor a blot to be found in her scutcheon ; and to make matters worse, the ladies were not even bankrupt ! The same obstacles which had formerly prevented Louis Philipon's marriage to poor Maria now threatened to separate her daughter from Count Leopolski. Wealth and family were no more terrifying to a professor's son that to the inheritor of a mighty Polish fortune. Adam was accustomed to courting only two kinds of women—those one needn't marry, and those who were married already. Thanks to this principle of conduct, he had reached the age of thirty-seven without losing the liberty by which he was enslaved. So fatally a prisoner that he could be delivered only by the warden of another gaol, he

passed from shackle to shackle, from cell to cell, always held prisoner, always under guard ; and his life, which his family compared to that of a butterfly, was really that of a convict clanking his chains.

The moment he saw Catherine, Adam Leopolski felt the need of being enslaved. At first he did not see the trap which was being set for him by fate. Nor did he think himself beaten. He soon began to reflect with a certain satisfaction on the act of discourtesy which he had just committed. It afforded him the pleasurable duty of apologizing as soon as possible, and thereby gave him an excuse for visiting Catherine's grandmother. He wrote her a sincerely desperate letter, stressing the absence of their common relative, Mme de la Feuillade—who, had she been in Paris, would certainly have interceded with Princess Dragomir to beg a pardon for her nephew. This pardon was necessary to his life. His emotion was unfeigned. For the last twenty-four hours, he had been marching from top to bottom of his house, inspecting its points of interest as Catherine had done, staring at his accomplice the Seine, fondling the muffler which had touched her throat, and pressing it to his lips. He was his own messenger. He carried his letter to the Rue Matignon, left it with Mme Fenouil, was shocked once more by the poverty of this gloomy building, and said that he would return in an hour for the answer. He spent this hour ascending and descending the alleys of the Champs-Élysées, in a pleasant reverie. He pictured Catherine's marriage to one of his poor cousins, who would not object to her being Adam's mistress. He saw her as an opera singer leaving for a tour of America ; he would be her manager. Or, he would simply drive her to Versailles, where she would lose her flowered hat a second time ;

with her hair floating in the wind, they would drive onward through the dusk. He knew a house where he was always welcome ; it was the home of a woman he had loved. Willing to be metamorphosed, she let herself be treated as a hostess-servant, whose presence did not embarrass him. He thought with pleasure of a bedroom with pale chintz curtains, which were dyed like certain sea-shells by the first pink rays of the sun. The days he would spend there with Catherine would be days without a morrow. His imagination had always refused to carry him beyond the first week.

He left the open nave of the Champs-Élysées, where twilight lingered. The day suddenly ended as he strode into the Rookery. Under the archway, it was already night. Mme Fenouil was knitting by the miserly rays of her lamp. "You can go right up," she told him ; "it's the door to the right on the first landing." In the stairway, a gas flame was beating its wings like a butterfly trapped in the darkness. Feeling his way, overcome by the smell of poverty and cooking, he thought of Goethe's words : "*Mehr Licht !*" However, neither the darkness nor the legible signs of poverty on the walls were calculated to displease him. Abbé Mésange had certainly been mistaken ; it was impossible that the old woman who lived in this hovel could be the real Princess Dragomir. His hopes rising, he pulled at the embroidered bell-cord. Maria Robinet appeared. She had the suspicious look of servants whose masters receive no callers ; she closed the door behind him and marched silently down the hall. Because his heart was beating violently, he expected to see Catherine.

Madam Princess rose as he entered. Suddenly Adam Leopolski ceased to be conscious of his

surroundings—the worn arm-chairs, the old rosewood table with its labelled drawers, the Carcel lamps, and all the sordid objects which formed the setting of this inexplicable life. He knew from the beginning that his hostess had the sort of inborn breeding which cannot be acquired. Timid and self-possessed at the same time, Princess Dragomir motioned him to a chair at her side and spoke of his grandmother, the Maréchale Leopolski, whom she had known. She referred to his town-house on the Ile Saint-Louis and discussed the art treasures of Zamosc, a country seat for which the Leopolskis were envied by all the nobility of Europe. His gifts of the morning were no more mentioned than if flowers, hat, and letter had been addressed to some ballerina of the Opéra ; they were beneath the notice of this great lady. He tried to phrase an invitation, which was refused immediately, with a smile. The Princess never went out. He asked after Catherine, learnt that she was well, and after this assurance felt that nothing remained except to make his adieux.

As he stumbled down the black stairway, he thought wildly of causing an explosion of gas ; he dreamt of setting fire to this hovel in order to reveal the beauty it concealed. He saw himself rescuing Catherine from the flames and ruins ; he was holding her clasped in his arms. This image made him tremble. After being an incendiary, he became a murderer : Princess Dragomir had been struck with apoplexy before she reached the door ; he pictured himself as comforting her grandchild, now alone in the world.

A fine rain was falling when he reached the street. For a moment he despaired of success. By what means could he ever return to a house from which he had been so politely dismissed ? He felt that unless he

discovered a feasible plan, he would lose all desire to live. He would send Abbé Mésange or Mme de la Feuillade to the house—to say what? He did not know, or rather, he knew only too well—to say that Count Adam Leopolski desired the honour of seducing Princess Dragomir's grandchild. And that was all! Never had he been so unhappy. He went to see his mistress and revealed himself as he really was—desperate. He was unable to face the thought of being alone, and wished to dine with her. Loving him passionately, this woman felt that he was seeking a refuge rather than a companion, and realized that she was going to lose him. She began to weep for no other reason, and Adam left her brusquely, repelled by the sight of grief which, though he had caused it, was not his own. That evening, as he always did when a woman was stealing him from another woman, he fell into a panic and telegraphed his mother. Countess Leopolski would be sure to help him. She took only three days to wind up her affairs in Poland; in less than a week she was in Paris. In another hour she had heard her son's confession and realized that his passion was being inflamed by circumstances; he had to stand watch in the streets merely to catch a glimpse of Catherine, and this made him love her all the more. The old Countess searched through her memory, discovered that she was a second cousin of Prince Jon, and decided that this time, with a little audacity, she might at last succeed in marrying off her son.

CHAPTER VI

Catherine Marries a Pole

SHE revealed her project only to Abbé Mésange, a simple-hearted genius who, like Cassandra, was always right and never obeyed. He tried to dissuade her :

"Madam, do you think that one woman could possibly hold Count Leopolski's affections, even for the few weeks required to publish the banns?"

She replied : "We shall get a dispensation !"

The Abbé raised his hand to the tassel of his biretta. "Madam, will you dispense the wind from blowing or the clouds from drifting through the sky? Count Leopolski might become engaged to water, air, or fire, to anything as unstable as himself, but I cannot imagine his marrying a poor young girl! . . ."

The Abbé knew that Adam was intractable, that he had been urged to marry ever since he had reached a marriageable age, and that he had fled from passion to passion to escape this duty. Having attained his majority at eighteen, as kings do, he had set off at a gallop. At thirty-seven he was galloping still. What would be the ending of this headlong flight, which seemed to exist in himself—in his timid eyes, in the backward toss of his head, in his open nostrils, and his flattened ears, and his pale hair smoothed by caresses or the wind? His mother thought that Providence, this time, had taken a hand in his affairs, by leaving an unobtainable maiden in his path. The

Abbé was convinced that Providence would soon grow weary.

The old Countess must act quickly, in either case. Tireless in all matters affecting her family, she climbed the five flights which led to M. Beau's lodgings in the Rue de Ponthieu. She did not even hesitate to lie. Her son, so she said, had insisted that she ask for Catherine's hand. But first she felt it her duty to make inquiries—and to whom should she turn, if not to a former tutor who had become the friend of the family? She had him tell her the story of the Dragomir ladies. With deep emotion, he celebrated the marvels of Princess Catherine, lamented the fate of poor Marie, and succeeded in convincing his visitor that he was an old simpleton. She did not even catch the truncated name of M. Lescaut, whom she took for an anarchist. She gave the address of Abbé Mésange, in the unlikely case that anyone wished further information about the Leopolskis, and put an end to the interview by announcing that she would visit Princess Dragomir the following week. On the landing she stopped as if something had slipped her mind, and asked in a casual way for the address of Catherine's grandfather, Prince Jon.

She drove back to the Hôtel Leopolski, went to her room, locked the door, and rushed to her writing-desk. Like many other women who claim to live in retirement, Leonilla Leopolska was in active correspondence with all the habitable earth. First she wrote to her cousin Mme de la Feuillade, asking her to advance the date of her return to Paris. Confidentially she told her that her son seemed at last in a marrying mood. A *débutantes'* ball in the Rue Saint-Dominique would give him an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with all the young ladies of

their circle, and more particularly with Mlles d'Entragues and de Dombes, the granddaughters of Her Grace. Next she wrote an international letter, similar in form to those diplomatic notes received by all chancelleries. In this case, however, a copy was addressed to each of her three eldest daughters, for whom she had found husbands in three different countries—for the first in Russia, for the second in Germany, and for the third in Austria—a fact which led Adam Leopolski to speak of “the new partition of Poland.” This circular announced the desired event, and enjoined her children to hold themselves ready. She also wrote her fourth daughter, nicknamed “the Papalina” for having married a Roman prince who was a privy chamberlain of the Pope; this letter requested a dispensation. She wrote the Prioress of Ragusa, her fifth daughter, whom she had dedicated to God. She wrote by the same mail to the lovely Mme Guyon, Adam’s present mistress, who, with her husband, the French ambassador to X——, was now spending a leave of absence in Paris. Mme Leopolska asked for a contribution to a parish charity of which she was the patroness. In this way, she would announce her presence on the Ile Saint-Louis and spread terror in the heart of the ambassadress.

Her last letter, addressed to Prince Jon, was a masterpiece of audacity. She began with the words, “*My cousin,*,” and ended with a formal offer of marriage in the name of the presumptive heir to the throne of Poland, Adam Leopolski, who was totally unaware of the proposal.

Every stratagem was successful. Not a thread of her web was broken. Her falsehoods, which she called “anticipations”, brought Mme de la Feuillade back

to the Rue Saint-Dominique in a frenzy of hope for her granddaughters. The *débutantes'* ball was announced. Prince Jon's consent to the proposal was inevitable and enthusiastic; he came posting from Moldavia to bring it in person. Adam's sisters held themselves ready to descend on Paris. As for the lovely Mme Guyon, she was sufficiently alarmed. The presence of Countess Leopolska, who, it was said in Vienna, detested Paris, only deepened her fears. A woman who loves is never deceived. This word, which expresses a fact, is almost always applied to men. Cursed with second sight, like all women who are about to lose their lovers, Mme Guyon did not fail to conduct herself exactly as the old Countess had expected. She cried before she was hurt. By making scenes which were not only heartbreaking, but premature, she hastened the event which she feared above all others. And Adam, imagining that her screams would reach the ears of his new love in some mysterious way—fearing that they would frighten away the timid shadow to which, day and night, he held out his arms—tried to silence his mistress, and was almost ready to kill her in order to stifle her cries.

He was in this state of mind when his mother, of whose manœuvres he knew nothing, announced that she had seen Catherine and had procured her an invitation to the duchess's ball. Adam went to the Rue Saint-Dominique, in haste to meet his unobtainable maiden. He came without plans and almost without hope. As soon as he crossed the threshold, Prince Dragomir pressed his hand with the restrained warmth of a man whose family has just been offered a brilliant alliance in exchange for another of no less brilliance. Adam made his way through a group of young ladies who, counselled by their mothers, tried

to hold him back. Finally, guided by a hum of voices, he found Catherine surrounded by a crowd of men. As she could not dance, he sat down beside her, and there he stayed all evening. Catherine was ignorant of social usages, and never thought to rise and interrupt this conversation which, by isolating her, was making her the centre of general interest. Her grandfather, believing that the proposal had now been made, went off to the smoking-room for a rubber of whist. Countess Leopolska felt that she was reaching her goal and spread the news of the engagement through the crowd, asking for silence. This silence took the form of a thousand whispers. The men, all of whom admired Catherine as she entered the ballroom, now trooped off, thinking that they would return in three years. They retired in hopes of consoling her later. In the clan of *débutantes*, a league was formed on the spot. Its aim was to exclude Catherine—from what and from where? They could not say. They were simply defending themselves. *Mlles d'Entragues* and *de Dombes* were their leaders. Following the usual custom of cabals, they would strive at first to weaken the adversary by loading her with the guilt of being born outside the community. They referred to her as "the little Wallack". Catherine had believed that her entrance into Society would involve her meeting a great number of the amiable people who smiled at her in the streets. She was left sitting alone with Adam Leopolski till the end of the evening.

Adam learnt of his engagement by reading the morning paper. His mother pretended to be surprised: did he wish to deny the announcement? In that case, he had only to write a letter to the editor, and to see Catherine no more. Already this was beyond his powers. Still sleepy, with only his passions waking,

he felt the need for seizure and possession. A sort of orderly rape, such as is possible in a well-policed society, was being planned for his benefit. The rapidity of the preliminaries was universally regarded as being lovers' haste ; instead it was caused by his mother's fear that the ravisher would abandon the pursuit. Countess Leopolska knew by experience that her son passed rapidly from one abduction to another ; hence, she was hastening all the usual steps of a marriage. She multiplied her son's pledges. Already there had been one proposal ; now Catherine's hand was again requested, this time by Adam himself, who approached first her guardian, then her tutor, and finally her grandparents. The request was granted—with pride by Prince Jon ; with resignation by Princess Catherine ; with feeling by M. Beau. Only her Uncle Charles-Adolphe was obstinate. He gave only a sort of negative consent. "One really doesn't marry a Pole," he said. "I don't know where this gentleman comes from. . . ." Vainly they informed him that Adam Leopolski had stepped from the pages of history, and would perhaps return there, being the heir of the Jagellons, a descendant of the kings of Poland and France, a grand-nephew of the Princess de Lamballe, and the illegitimate great-grandson of Louis XV. Uncle Charles-Adolphe treated these assertions as the whimsies of historians, serving no other purpose than to divert the frivolous mind of M. Beau. Let the suitor be what he will—let him bear an ancient title ; let him hold the richest estates of Europe in entail ; let him be lord of the widest domain in the world ; and let him possess in Paris a mansion which was the most curious, if not the finest, between the two banks of the Seine—none of these glories could dazzle the anchorite of the Latin Quarter. He continued obstinately to believe that his niece was

marrying a Polish nobody. But he knew that he could not dissuade her. Catherine was in love with many things and believed that she was in love with Adam. As happens only with very pure girls, she did not know that her senses existed. Now that they were stirring within her, she took them for the raptures of her heart.

CHAPTER VII

The Dynastic Family

IT was a busy month for Maria Robinet. Distrusting all perfumes and holding that any form of excess was a vice, she guarded Catherine's door against lilies, gardenias, and tuberoses, but especially against orchids, those diabolical flowers that show their horns, stick out their tongues, and cost a fortune. Neither would Madam Princess admit them to her parlour. Bouquet after bouquet, they piled up in the hallway, in the pantry, and even in Angela's kitchen. Mme Fenouil, who saw these mountains of flowers when they arrived, and found them three days later in the rubbish-heap, confided to the servants that people were stopping her in the streets to ask whether there had been a death in the family. Like other old Frenchwomen, they were outraged by luxury and waste, and—"isn't it a shame," they chorused, "to have so many flowers you don't know where to put them!"

There was indeed a death, but not in the family. The lovely Mme Guyon, on hearing what everybody knew, and what she herself had been the first to conjecture, felt unable to live under the burden of her sorrow multiplied to infinity; and being a daughter of the people, raised to high rank by the passion of a Radical statesman, this ambassador's wife put an end to herself like some little abandoned seamstress, by

jumping into the Seine. The scandal was international ; code messages carried the news from embassy to embassy throughout the world ; but no whisper of it reached the Rookery. The anonymous letters were written but never mailed : Princess Dragomir's address was not listed in "*Tout Paris*". Only after meeting with other misfortunes and making friends of her own sex, did Catherine learn that her marriage had caused a woman's death.

Countess Leopolska was outraged on hearing of an event which she had not been able to predict. She had always helped her son in his raptures with Society women. This time, she thought, he had been unlucky enough to choose a person devoid of principles. She read in the newspapers that Mme Guyon's porter had seen her rushing out—just imagine !—bare-headed. The old Countess was profoundly shocked to think that a woman who took precedence over her in Vienna had shown such an utter lack of breeding as to go running through the streets without a hat. There was no use wasting her pity on such a creature. In the person of all the women her son had abandoned, the old Countess was revenging herself on those other women whom her husband had once preferred to herself. She applied *lex talionis* to the second and even the third generation. Her son was avenging the wrongs she had suffered from her sex. And yet, she was baffled by this suicide. When one of Adam's mistresses, at the moment of separation, seemed bent on holding him back, his mother used to say like a riding-master :

"I tell you, she is a poor horsewoman. Not only does she let herself be thrown, but she insists on being dragged by the stirrups !"

Mme Guyon had found another fashion of ending her fall.

Adam was accustomed to lavish his favours on a desired woman, so long as she was desired. But he also had a fashion of putting a sudden stop to his generosity. To the woman who begged for more, he seemed to say : "Pass on, poor creature ! You have had your share already." Mme Guyon, however, had refused to hold out a useless hand. Adam wondered whether he were not, in a way, being frustrated by this death, which robbed him of a pleasure to which he had grown accustomed. As soon as his love had vanished, his mistresses, in return for what he had lost, would give him their own suffering. In this he found a sort of compensation.

Soon the affair was mentioned no more in Society. Adam's discomfort was forgotten even more quickly. His attention was claimed by his marriage. Already his sisters were arriving from the four countries where they had founded a cult in his honour. They regarded him with an almost superstitious reverence. They knew that after their father died, it was only the birth of this posthumous son that left them in possession of Zamosc and its splendours. They revered the majesty of the Salic law in the person of their brother ; they respected his bank account ; they had always obeyed his whims ; and, though virtuous themselves, they admired his dissolute life as being faithful to the tradition of Louis XV, from whom the Leopolskis were proud to claim descent.

On being informed of Mme Guyon's suicide, the Papalina, who lacked neither wit nor learning, remembered a scene of princely crimes and nicknamed their house "The Tour de Nesles". Meeting her brother at the door, she declaimed : "How many bodies has the

river claimed to-day? Two or three, as usual. . . !” Adam did not know whether to laugh or to be angry. At heart, he was flattered.

Since everything went quickly, everything went well. Abbé Mésange, who was charged with converting Catherine, discovered that she was already a convert. The fair schismatic was all the more ready to abjure her schism for having learned the credo of Maria Robinet. With the slightly different creed of the Greek church, she was totally unfamiliar. The difference, which could be reduced to the word *Filioque* —“and from the Son”—impressed her as being merely a question of grammar. And she gladly dispensed with the idea of receiving her nuptial benediction from those Magi with beards and golden robes who had so appalled her at the time of her mother’s funeral.

Prince Jon found it only natural that his granddaughter, on entering a family which had reigned over Poland, should embrace the established religion of that country. You never can tell who will reign. Once there have been kings in a family, nobody can swear that there will not be others. Madam Princess, who was philosophic, and M. Beau, who was Catholic, saw nothing against the abjuration, which the Leopolskis demanded as a condition of the marriage. Uncle Charles-Adolphe alone, being a free-thinker, was indignant ; he found it unseemly to change his niece’s religion ; he believed that the nature of marriages was to be dissolved, and distrusted the church that rendered them indissoluble ; he held for the conjugal policy of the open door. He gained no hearing ; and neither did Abbé Mésange, who wished the doors to be closed more tightly. The good priest believed that the marriage, unless celebrated at St. Philip’s, in the

bride's parish, was open to pleas for annulment. But as usual his counsel went unheeded ; the vainglorious Leopolskis were bent on holding the wedding in the chapel of the Invalides. This would require a special authorization, for which they applied to the military governor of Paris, urging that Adam's great-grandfather, who had died on the battlefield, was the first Pole to be a marshal of France. Through a certain feeling of decorum, their other reasons were not given, though the Leopolskis found them even more cogent. Adam's sisters were shocked at his taking a bride from the Rookery. Since Catherine had blossomed in a hovel like Cinderella in her kitchen, it was fitting that she should pass from darkness into light, on the day of her wedding, through the lofty portals which are surmounted by heroic sculptures of the Sun-King. These ladies believed that when one is descended from Louis XV, one cannot fail to be descended from Louis XIV also : *Nec pluribus impar*. In the Invalides, the bride and groom would march under the shadow of battle-standards captured from all Europe, and would kneel to receive the apostolic benediction before the altar which guards the tomb of Napoleon—another relative of the Leopolskis, on the distaff side. There was no other church, so they thought, where the wedding could really be celebrated *in the family*. However, after the formal refusal of the French government, they changed their minds, and turning toward Versailles, discovered new charms in St. Louis's Cathedral. Its steeple, built by Louis the Well-beloved for his wife Maria Leczinska, was in the same style as that of Zamosc, a circumstance which flattered their vanity.

The day of their betrothal, Adam had given Catherine a little ring which was ugly but historic. It was the

one which Louis XV had slipped on the finger of Mme de Novelet, whose legitimized daughter by the king, after becoming the niece of Maria Leczinska by marrying the great Leopolski, was destined to mingle the blood of the wife and the mistress in that of her children, and thus to unite the family of Louis the Saint with that of Adam. These matters were explained to Catherine by Countess Leopolska, the guardian of tradition. It seemed to M. Beau's pupil that she was back in her schooldays. All the fiancées of the Leopolskis for the last two hundred and thirty years had worn this ring with veneration; it dated from the younger days of Louis XV, when he still was thrifty with his people's tithes and had not yet chosen a mistress from the people. In vain they informed Catherine of the royal adultery which had exalted all this family; in vain they spoke bluntly of first beds and second beds, from which Adam held such and such a title, such and such a necklace, such and such a castle; her ignorance remained as deep as ever. Words express only the feelings we know already. Such terms as "mistress", "fires", and "lover" have very little meaning for children that read Racine.

A few days before the wedding, which he judged to be hasty and ill-advised, Uncle Charles-Adolphe observed to Madam Princess that a month earlier, the only Adam known to the Rookery was the Adam of original sin. She found a double meaning in this remark. Should she allow her granddaughter to set out with a stranger for a goal which she herself knew only too well? The motherless girl should be given a warning. It was her own duty to give it. She sought for an image in her past, and found not one which did not seem shocking. In her heart, this virtuous

woman felt ashamed of an act which the human conscience has never ceased to regard as a sin—and of all sins the one most difficult for parents to confess to their children. She felt guilty when facing her innocent grandchild, as if all the laws of God and man would not suffice for her justification. She realized that she had been seeking excuses for fifty years and had not found them. She remembered that in her youth, there had been two good means of teaching children : letting them play in the barnyard, and other children. But Catherine, an only daughter, brought up by old men far from poultry yards, kennels, and school-girl confidences, was a product of the city : Paris had kept her innocent. Her grandmother trembled at having to teach her something which she herself had known for such a long time, without ever growing accustomed to it. She recalled her worst memories, and caressing the young girl's cheek with her almost fleshless hand, she said to her one evening in a hasty murmur :

“Do you know what marriage is ? No ? You don't know ? I shall tell you, then : it is frightful . . . at first, but afterwards it is just like eating and drinking. . . .”

Adam's family wished to surround the principal ceremony with many lesser ceremonies—more even than were possible in a republic. They thought of guarding the church with the Leopolski regiment of hussars, but permission was refused by the authorities. The armed troops of a foreign government were forbidden to pass through Paris ; only two hussars could be obtained. The Polish party took their revenge by establishing an order of precedence identical to that which Saint-Simon, two centuries before, had

opposed so vehemently ; that is, by seating French dukes below foreign princes, and thus humiliating M. Armand Fallières. The President of France, unfortunately, did not feel the insult, being buried away in his palace, far from the rumours of Society. However, the Duchess de la Feuillade was struck with consternation. She had offered her house in the Rue Saint-Dominique for a reception in honour of the marriage-settlement. She had remembered that she was born a Dragomir. Perhaps, if Catherine had made a less distinguished match, Her Grace would have forgotten. Since she was acting handsomely towards what she called her foreign kin, she was indignant when she learnt that she was to be seated below the mediatized princelings of Austria and Germany. She could understand their giving a place of honour to the second of the Leopolska girls ; after all, this lady was a sovereign, having married the reigning margrave of Saxe-Schlossenburg ; but imagine the disgrace of having to walk at the heels of a Serene Highness ! And in Paris of all places ! At the very thought of this indignity, her blood—or rather her late husband's blood—froze in her veins.

She was driven headlong to the Ile Saint-Louis. There she made a scene which lasted two hours, being punctuated with references to Prussia, foreigners, Sedan, and the insult now offered to France. She threatened to withdraw the offer of her house. It was no use. The Leopolskis reminded her that she herself belonged to one of those petty but royal families whose professions is the making of nobles. The descendants of a sovereign—that is, of a man who even for a single day, even in a country which exists no longer, has had the privilege of saying : “We, by the grace of God !”—are necessarily to be ranked above

a merely breveted nobility, whose position is always somewhat menial. . . .

The quarrel became furious, as in the great days when the Lorraine princes upheld their rights at the French court. This time also, precedence and patriotism were inextricably mingled. Catherine looked on dispassionately, as if at a rather interesting historical play, without thinking that she herself would ever mount the stage. She attached no importance to questions of nobility; she knew that her mother had never borne her title, being referred to simply as "Madam" in the kitchen. When the servants called her grandmother "Madam Princess", it seemed almost as if "Princess" were an odd sort of family name; at most, it seemed neither a title nor a privilege, but merely a graceful way they had of addressing her, much as they would call Catherine "my saint", or "my little queen". Uncle Charles-Adolphe, by not even bearing the name of Romulesco, gave proof of an even greater simplicity.

Such democratic sentiments would have puzzled Leonilla Leopolska. Indeed, she feared that Catherine's familiarity with the title of princess would make her feel humiliated at her marriage with a count. She went to great lengths in explaining that Adam was a count in the same sense that the pretender to the throne of France was the Count of Paris. *Leopol*, the place from which he took his name, was a city called Lemberg by the Austrians. He was count of Lemberg merely because he was not the king of Poland—and also because one of his ancestors had refused to be made a prince by Maria Theresa. The Viennese, who are connoisseurs of nobility, called him the arch-count. Catherine was still too timid to reply that she loved only the countess's son, and not the Leopolskis that

flourished under Maria Theresa or Henri III. His mother always spoke of him as if he had marched through the centuries in person. Meanwhile, these questions of precedence were threatening to delay the wedding. Abbé Mésange, in deep alarm, went vainly preaching the gospel of the humble; the first should be last; but nobody wished to be first in the sense of the Scriptures. M. Beau recalled what was done at Notre Dame in 1558, when the Dauphin was married to Mary Queen of Scots. Uncle Charles-Adolphe ridiculed the whole affair with a quotation:

But all these ladies spend their days
In quarrels over precedence. . . .

At last the Papalina remembered her training at the court of the Vatican, and suggested a solution. The wedding feast could be spread in the Rotunda, also called the Marble Room, which had six doors of equal height; twelve people could enter simultaneously to the sound of music, thus creating twenty-four seats of honour. The table, being perfectly round, would have no ends. This ingenious arrangement satisfied everybody except the reigning couple of Saxe-Schlossenbad, who had been sure of being first. Margrave Ernest tried to prevent his mother-in-law from giving a banquet in what he called a swimming-pool, but she was obstinate; indeed, she was only too happy to annoy this ruler, whom she despised in secret for being poor, although she venerated him in public for having the right to coin money.

There was another dispute two days before the wedding, with Princess Dragomir on one side and the Polish party on the other. It was the Leopolski tradition that the bride should enter the church in

all her jewels. Madam Princess, whose age was an excuse for never leaving the house, sent word to the Ile Saint-Louis that she would never consent to Catherine's wearing her diamonds at high noon. It was in very bad taste; and besides, it wasn't the French custom. Mme Leopolska sent word to the Rookery that neither party to the marriage being French, there was no excuse for following any other customs than those of her own family. But Madam Princess did not yield. She answered, also by messenger, that the ceremony was being held in France, and that her grandchild would certainly follow the custom of Paris, which was not to have one's jewels blessed in church. Thereupon it was decided that Catherine should wear them to the reception in the Rue Saint-Dominique, so that Adam could see them on her. He loved diamonds as women love them. Their mingled brilliance of fire and water filled him with joy, as if a forgotten energy were being roused within him. During the years when he refused to marry, he had only one regret: namely, that by not choosing a Countess Leopolska, he was renouncing the pleasure of seeing these jewels. His mother had ceased to wear them when she became a widow. Had he only dared, he would have sewn them to his coat, like his ancestor Louis XV. The woman who wore them round her neck, on her brow, and dangling from her ears, was sure to fascinate him. And yet, when Catherine entered the Hôtel La Feuillade in all their steely brilliance, she was defeated in spite of her armour. That evening, Adam felt tired of her for the first time.

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During the four weeks which had just elapsed, he had taken his fiancée from one dressmaker to another,

as he was accustomed to do with his mistresses. He had initiated her into the rites of elegance, such as he understood them. Finding himself in the same establishments that he had haunted with other women, concerning himself with the same problems, and speaking the specialized language of the *grands couturiers*, he ended by forgetting his passion for Catherine and surrendering himself to his love of adornment, for which she became merely an excuse. All the gowns he ordered in times past had been destined for women who belonged to him. By dint of selecting Catherine's dresses, he came to believe that he knew her already, since he was familiar with everything she wore. The Abbé's prediction had been fulfilled. The state of betrothal, by giving him the certainty of possessing Catherine, had acted on his sick imagination in a manner almost as destructive as real possession.

On the evening of the reception, all the advantage of surprise, which could no longer be Catherine's, fell to the seventh daughter of Baroness Hederváry, Adam's maternal aunt, known universally as "Mother Egypt". This widow, who had been reduced to poverty when her husband's entailed estates had passed, after his death, to another branch of the family, had no less than seven daughters, whom she called her Seven Plagues. Being, as it were, the preliminary sketches for a brother they had never possessed, all of them walked, smoked, and saluted like soldiers. They led a hand-to-mouth existence in Budapest. The baroness had risked a trip to Paris with her five younger daughters, thinking that the absence of the two eldest would pass unnoticed. Often she would say: "My mother was a great lady; I am a lady; my daughters will be lady's maids—

that is, unless I can find a Bluebeard to marry all seven!" For such a Bluebeard, or for any other beard, she went seeking almost everywhere. Perhaps she would find him in the Rue Saint-Dominique, at this reception where the Faubourg Saint-Germain was being reunited with its suburbs of the "*Almanach de Gotha*".

Majestically the baroness paraded her file of daughters from room to room. As they approached the tables where the gifts were being displayed, an eddy in the crowd detached the youngest. The little Hungarian was frightened at finding herself alone among strangers, and glanced about her with the wild eyes of a fox-cub caught in a trap. Adam saw her as she was struggling to rejoin her troop. He was amused by her rustic air. Short and dark, she was as arrogant as an innkeeper's daughter, and wore magnificent plaits low over her forehead, like cushions on which to rest a basket of fruit or a pail of milk. She walked in her dancing slippers as if she were booted and spurred. Adam followed her with his eyes until she rejoined her squadron. "One of Mother Egypt's daughters!" he thought to himself.

Ever since Catherine had rendered him immune to the danger of marriage, he had ceased to be frightened by *débutantes*. He had even begun to seek them. She had taught him to enjoy the freshness of young girls—for, when a man loves a woman, she unconsciously creates a desire in him for all the women of her type. Adam caught sight of Prince Lenkoranski, the eldest member of their family, and hastily presented him to Catherine. As soon as he heard the prince begin, with a Podolian accent: "It is now a hundred and ten years since my grandfather he marry my grandmother," Adam darted away.

Partly sheltered by a door, he spoke as the stranger

passed at the end of her file : "Dear cousin, what is thy name ?" He was using the familiar pronoun already.

"Roji is my name ; it's Rose in Hungarian."

"Well then, my Rose of Hungary, thou shalt be plucked. . . ." And taking her arm, he led her into the thickest of the crowd, where they were lost.

Meanwhile Catherine had taken a seat beside the dean of the family. She felt that Adam's departure was easy to explain, for he must be familiar with all the history of the Leopolskis, and would hardly be anxious to hear it repeated. Prince Lenkoranski, being deaf, listened to his own words, but did not always hear them. With furious emphasis, he would then repeat the phrase which had escaped without his knowledge. He began again :

"It is now a hundred and ten years since my grandfather he marry my grandmother. She was beautiful, but not like you. She was a Savoy-Carignan. Her sister was the Princess de Lamballe. In 1792, you guillotine her sister *here !*"

And he pounded his cane on the innocent floor of the Hôtel La Feuillade.

The dean of the family had a mania for reproaching no matter whom with the death of his relative. He regarded every Frenchman as being responsible for the horrors of the Revolution. He neglected entirely to ask whether his auditors belonged to the side of the guillotiners, or to that of the guillotined. As president of the Jockey Club of Warsaw, he was an honorary member of the Jockey Club in Paris. This did not prevent him from accusing his French associates, nobles though they were, of being anarchists and regicides ; nor would he hear a word in their defence. To Prince Lenkoranski, as to almost all the

monarchists of Europe, France without a king was an international scandal. He seemed to think that Marianne, like the martyred St. Denis, was marching through the streets with her own head under her arm. The fiancée observed that he was confusing the death of Mme de Lamballe, who was killed by the mob, with the execution of Marie Antoinette. But she failed to remark that he was also mistaken in regarding her, Catherine Romulesco, as a French-woman.

Suddenly she felt a desire to leave this reception which was being given in her honour. She was dizzy with the weight of the diadem ; she was dazzled by a splendour which she bore and did not see. Under this borrowed ornament, she felt herself to be a stranger among strangers. Where was Adam, who had taken her there, and for whose pleasure she was enduring these painful jewels ?

That good soul, the Papalina, now approached to deliver her from the dean of the family, and incidentally to ask where Adam was. "What," she planned to say, "you don't know ? I thought I saw him with one of Mother Egypt's daughters, but, of course, one can't be certain. . . ." She had no chance to begin her speech. Just as Catherine was rising, they were interrupted by Margrave Ernest, who, since the beginning of the evening, had been staring at the fiancée. His eyes already had a faithful look. He stammered out, like a child offering his play-things : "Can I present my gentlemen ?"

At first Catherine could not understand just how they belonged to him. They were two Saxon officers, one fat, one lean, and both of them very red ; one was a marshal of his court ; the other was his aide-de-camp. The Papalina, who left gentility to the

middle classes, clapped him on the shoulder and embarrassed him by imitating the accent of a Paris washerwoman : "An aide-de-camp ! And there is no camp ! And God knows they need a camp in Schlossenbad ! And why do they need a camp, my dear Ernest ? Why, so they can all decamp from it ; there's nothing they like better !"

The margrave, bringing his heels together and clasping his hands, asked in a pitiful voice : "Are you *speaking ironic* ?"—as if *ironic* were a language with which he was unacquainted. The Papalina, who had the little ferocious witty eyes of some fat women, winked them and said in the hoarse voice which she could make so vulgar : "Just look at him, my dear ! Is that a state for a monarch to be in ?" And she sailed away like a victorious vessel after battle, leaving her place to her sister.

The margravine, as she hurried to the rescue of her sovereign from the other end of the room, had composed a little speech, which she delivered to Catherine in a wonderfully sweet and reassuring voice. She was the most frequently humiliated member of this humiliating family. The Papalina explained that she had lost caste by marrying above her station. As a result of feeling that her mere presence wounded the self-esteem of her sisters, the margravine had formed the habit of speaking to them in a low voice, as if to invalids. Even her gestures seemed always to be anticipating the honours which, by refusing them, she claimed as her due. When she became a sovereign, she had exchanged the right of being insolent in the name of a great past for the duty of making herself respected in the name of a less glorious present. This was difficult even at Zamosc ; but in Paris she was still more uncertain

of her footing, and was so afraid of not receiving homage that she offered it herself. With the air of a nurse bringing morphine, she murmured : "Beginning this evening, there will be no Monseigneurs, no Madams, no Royal Highnesses ; Ernest and I shall be your brother and sister, Catherine, and you will be a sister to us both ! But to avoid confusion in the family, we beg you to keep your second name. Ah, Paris ! It is so very pretty !"

The margravine sighed in a transport of admiration, without one's being able to tell whether she was thinking of the name or the city. But meeting the eyes of the aide-de-camp, she added hastily : "And Schlossenbad is very pretty too. . . . There are so many birds !" She was afraid of being disloyal if she preferred any other capital to her own in front of her subjects. Then, having finished her speech, she fell silent.

Countess Leopolska, watching the manœuvres of her family from a settee, observed that conversation had lapsed between Catherine-Paris and Catherine of Saxony. She knew that her daughter, through her contact with reigning families, had forgotten the customs of Society. The margravine could no longer pass from one idea to another, but only from one person to another, according to the laws of the court circle. Round this imaginary ring she galloped like a circus rider, jumping, as she passed, through the hoops of silence which were held out to her ; but if she had to stop before one person who held an empty hoop, she had nothing more to say. Countess Leopolska therefore dispatched her Austrian son-in-law, Prince Louis Ferdinand Auersburg, to rally the chieftains of the Polish clan, the Moravian clan, the Croatian clan, the Baltic clan, and the Ruthenian clan, now scattered

through the mansion. His instructions were to lead them forward in a body and present them to Catherine, thus masking Adam's disappearance, which was somewhat disturbing to the old Countess—although, on the eve of the marriage, she had no real cause to fear that he would escape.

Then began a long procession of woodsmen dressed as courtiers, marching forward as if for the dress rehearsal of that other reception which would take place the following day in the sacristy of St. Louis's Cathedral. The fiancée was ignorant of social conventions, and transgressed them all by reviewing this family guard, which included the crack officers of several nations, not at the side of Adam, but under the auspices of her Austrian brother-in-law. Prince Louis Ferdinand, who was now in his fiftieth year, had been a hunter since the age of seven, and thought of nothing but the chase. The belling of a stag was the loveliest music he knew. Several rows of dead animals composed the fairest picture. A banquet meant only venison, and love was a sort of rut. Hence, he accompanied each presentation with some reference to the art of venery. Uncle von Colosvar, for example, had no equal for grouse. Count Paldeky was blessed with flocks of capercailzie. Hansi Wredenbach, their cousin from Upper Austria, was known not only for lammergeyers, but for herds of chamois invisible to the naked eye. The Duke of Utrecht surpassed the English king in hares and pheasants. The name of Bela Andrassy was a synonym for brown Carpathian bears. And the list continued. Dominick Talkievitch had elk on his estates. Erik Ehrenthal was satisfied to own a mountain teeming with mouflons. Uncle Bielovieski was famous for his bustards, and Fritzi Khoun excelled in fallow-deer.

As for Prince von Ploen, whose hereditary forests covered all Mazuria, he went to great expense in harbouring the last of the aurochs. Each of these beasts cost a fortune and had a name. Only one was sacrificed every ten years, and then only if the season was good. This easy shot was reserved for emperors, a species almost as rare as the European bison. . . . And all these men, who divided the fauna of a continent between them, suggested to Catherine that she kill a chamois, an elk, a few brace of bustards, or a thousand pheasants in their company. She excused herself, saying that she had never held a gun in her hands. They replied that Adam, whose preserves were magnificent, would certainly not leave her in such ignorance of the real pleasures of life.

Adam . . . but where was Adam? She found herself surrounded by a crowd of these sedulous giants, whose shoulders concealed the other guests. They were jostling each other to catch a glimpse of her. Like a child lost in a mob, she stood on tip-toe, trying to escape them, hoping to discover her fiancé. He was nowhere to be seen. She felt as if she had wandered into a forest where all the huntsmen had been transformed into the wild beasts of which they spoke. Catherine was afraid; she could see beaks, claws, or fangs on all of them. Every family-in-law is an alien family, but that of Adam was indescribably so. Why had she not been reared in her grandfather's manor of Miroslava, among the reeds of the Pruth? Then perhaps she would have felt at home among these prowling hunters. But her childhood had been spent in the Rue Matignon, where the cry of the wild goose is never heard. . . .

Mme de la Feuillade was dissatisfied. All her plans for the reception had gone astray. Her guests

of the Faubourg Saint-Germain eddied about her, not knowing to whom they should offer their congratulations, which nevertheless they felt should be offered, since they had brought them along. The French had expected to find the young couple and their parents in a little group at the door of the ball-room, waiting to give them a proper reception. Instead they found only the duchess, and that evening her presence was insufficient. Everywhere in the sluggish crowd they saw faces which bore the marks of the open air—the men too high in colour; the women unrouged, and either not pink enough or else covered with blotches. The costumes were lacking in *ensemble*: there were magnificent jewels, such as the French have ceased to display since the affair of the Queen's Necklace, but there were also many fans made of eagle feathers, cock feathers, and blue-jay feathers, which smelt of Tyrol and the Carpathians. The guests were told that the fiancée was somewhere behind a hedge of men with insurmountable shoulders; nobody knew where Adam was to be found. Countess Leopolska was holding court—or rather, holding sofa in the Viennese fashion, being seated at the extreme right of the most important settee. Prince Jon, having found an old comrade from the siege of Plevna among the Russian branch of the family, had retired into the study of the late duke, where he was playing a formal game of piquet with his brother hero. Princess Dragomir, who had retired from Society forty years before, was discreetly absent. Society thought she was dead; in this respect, her life had been successful. An espionage system was spontaneously organized under the direction of the young ladies belonging to the League for National Defence Against Catherine; Julie d'Entragues and Marie-Thérèse de Dombes

were the two chief detectives. They were quick to discover Adam Leopolski in the conservatory, where he was showing the potted palms to his cousin—who, of course, had never seen such plants before. As it is always very cold in hot-houses, he had slipped his cousinly arm round her neck, the better to protect her from the icy blast of the radiators. The conspirators held a council in the dressing-room near by. In the centre of the ball-room, her jewels sparkling under the chandelier, Catherine-Paris, surrounded with cavaliers, was breaking hearts on the very eve of her marriage—a miracle which had never been known before. Adam Leopolski had not only endowed her, at a stroke of his pen, with town houses, country seats, shooting boxes, gowns, and jewels for life, but he was also making her a neglected woman and hence, in the general estimation, a woman without obligations. In the eyes of her future associates, this combined good-fortune was more than any mortal deserved. The Leaguers were convinced that if Catherine had made any effort whatever to keep him, Adam would not have consoled himself for his disappointment by wandering into the conservatory with the first woman he met. When they saw him in the same ball-room a month before, had he not clung all evening to Catherine's side? Obviously she had become indifferent, having made her catch. The Leaguers decided to announce everywhere that the little Wallack had no breeding—which, in their sense of the word, was only too true. During the course of this reception at which French mixed with foreigners no more than water does with oil, Catherine was brought to justice and tried by an international court. She was unanimously condemned for reasons which might appear contradictory—by the French because she was a

foreigner, and by the foreigners because she was French. Only a few old matrons, the belles of their day, felt that they had witnessed the beginning of a reputation which would travel all over Europe, triumphant and reviled. Their hearts were stirred by Catherine as they thought of their own youth.

The men of all countries, while judging her innocent, condemned her nevertheless to have her head turned by themselves, and prepared to execute their sentence without delay.

CHAPTER VIII

Louis XV and Francis Joseph

IN the Court of St. Louis's Cathedral in Versailles, just as the bride was coming down the steps, a Swiss Guard rushed forward, brandishing his halberd. Speaking in German, the language of the guests, he said something which Catherine did not understand. Then, offering her a ring, he translated: "*Madame la Comtesse* has lost her wedding ring." As they were driving through the gate, a schoolboy in the crowd spied the Leopolski hussar perched on his seat and cried: "Long live the Emperor." Immediately there was a hiss. They drove to the Rue Matignon, where Mme Fenouil stared at them from her lodge. Rose, the wineseller's daughter, and Antoinette, the grandchild of the concierge, came rushing to the bride and helped to carry her train. Then, as on a former occasion, by a dark stairway that smelt of leaking gas and coffee grounds, they climbed in procession to the mezzanine, where Madam Princess was waiting surrounded by her women: Angela the cook and Maria Robinet. They had opened both wings of the door to receive her, and the table had been pushed against the wall. Catherine's bridal robe was longer than the apartment. She had only time to kiss her grandmother, who embraced her in silence. She also kissed the two servants. Her last visit was as brief as an apparition, and she disappeared before Maria Robinet was able to

recognize her. The old servant afterwards said that she thought she was seeing the Holy Virgin.

The wedding breakfast was served in the Hôtel Leopolski. As they drove eastward along the *quais*, Catherine fixed her eyes on this curious house which was more easily visible than attainable. She saw it trembling in the water, with all its shadows and all its trees. As on the first day, people were crowding up the carpeted stairs, but the faces were not the same. When they entered the Rotunda by six doors of equal height, the Leopolski orchestra, consisting of twelve gipsies in red livery, attacked their instruments. It was impossible to make oneself heard. Conversation having ceased, the French lost their advantages. The Germans, the Slavs, and all the ethnographic divisions of these two races, lost nothing whatsoever. Only a few Italian voices, delivered from Austrian tyranny, rang out above the tumult ; they were louder than the cymbalon. After drinking wines which came from the four quarters of the Habsburg empires—wines of Spain, wines of Tokay—the guests were served with a French wine. An old man placed at Catherine's left, rising to his feet, flourished his glass in the air : "To our august Master, His Apostolic Majesty the Emperor and King Francis Joseph."

In the silence that followed, the Papalina was heard to mutter : "Why don't you speak for yourself ?" He was the Austrian ambassador.

The orator then turned to Catherine, with a speech which left her dumbfounded : "I drink to the health of a lady who is, from this time forth, the loveliest subject of my Emperor, the pride of my embassy, the flower of my official staff. . . ." Thus, all the arrogant grandeur, all the pride, all the pretentious

titles, and the field-m Marshals' batons, and the crowns, with which she had been overawed for the last four weeks, had led only to the word "subject", for which she was totally unprepared. Nor did she understand why she was to be considered a member of any official staff. Adam had taken his seat without thanking the ambassador. He now leaned over to old Lenkoranski, and shouting in his ear, explained that he had asked to be made an attaché of the Austrian embassy, not that he intended to meddle with diplomacy, but simply in order to avoid paying taxes in France.

II. Adam

CHAPTER I

ADAM

ADAM never did what was expected of him ; he did other things in other fashions. To such a degree was this true, that in childhood he poured his cocoa on the tablecloth and spilt his glass of water on the floor. His governesses, who were never allowed to punish him, learnt to control him by rousing his instinct for contradiction. Everything went by opposites. To make him eat, it was necessary not only to take away his plate, but to give it to someone else ; he felt hunger only if it was mixed with jealousy. When his sisters were seized with a longing to touch his face, as if beauty were contagious, they had first to tell him that kissing was forbidden. Before he would learn to read, his books had to be hidden away. He was sad on holidays and joyful when he was punished ; he was unpunishable. His fearful childhood had never been outgrown ; it had only taken another form ; at thirty-seven he was the same, and his governesses, who were now called his mistresses, continued to use the same methods.

As they drove toward the Gare de l'Est on the night of their wedding, Adam was melancholy. A month of promises certain to be fulfilled, on a given day, by an act long foreseen, to which the distasteful notion of an accomplished duty would henceforth be attached, had sufficed to destroy his passion. How splendid this passion had been, in the days when he

was bound to another ! It was this other, the lovely and cruel Guyon, who had robbed him of his love by drowning it ; for she had drowned it indeed, like a heartbroken mother who leaps into the river with her child. To each of his mistresses, Adam had owed his love for her successor ; it was the fruit of their union, and the woman's duty was to make it grow and prosper. Why had this one mistress been false to her task ? She was no longer present to encourage him with her tears and to furnish the necessary obstacle without which he could enjoy nothing. They had thought he was "gone" on Catherine. But, alas ! how could he go when there was nothing to hold him back ?

In order to warm this dead heart, and to encourage this strange bridegroom to whom nothing possible was permitted, it would have been necessary for Catherine to have some foreknowledge of an art which she would acquire only with age. How was she to have known that Adam could be enthralled by dissonance, surprise, and the magic of disappointment ? Where could she have learnt to withdraw her hand from an inert hand, to simulate a scene, to do no matter what, provided that it be violent, brief, and unexpected—like throwing herself from a window or taking another train ? Instead she allowed herself to be invaded by the incomprehensible sadness of her companion, a sort of animal melancholy which in his case preceded the joy of possession, as if this man who did everything backwards had even reversed the order of Nature. Their compartment in the Orient Express was heaped with flowers ; it seemed a burial vault, and its two berths were a sort of double bier. Catherine, on the threshold of this mahogany tomb, lived through the memories of her first journey. As

soon as she heard the hum of the rails, it reminded her of her earliest game :

When Papa rides horseback to Paris,
He walks, and he walks, and he walks !

She was rushing off at a gallop by the road she had come. Caught between two steel rails, without being able to switch either northwards or southwards into the depths of France, she was being hurried toward the eastern frontier. The lights of Meaux were dancing over her face. A storm met the train. Through a streaming window, Catherine saw the drowned roads fleeing in the distance ; the trees as if routed were falling back on Paris. Everything had the air of a lost battle. Adam, who had been standing in the corridor since they left the Gare de l'Est, continuing a conversation with his valet, now sought Catherine's eyes, which were seeking his no longer. Perceiving that she had been looking backwards for a long moment, he entered the compartment, slipped his arm behind her, and jerked the curtain shut. By her averted face, by her infinite gaze toward the fields as they fled into the night, Catherine had just reawakened the savage desire he felt, when, for the first time, he had seen her looking away. He did not give her time to return to him. She must not return. This absentee was the woman he desired. Merciless as a footpad, he robbed her before she lost consciousness. He robbed her of her innocent desire for him ; he brought the music of her senses to a stop, as one deadens the troublesome vibration of a glass. He took away her feeling of assent, and this is a loss which honour does not survive. The wound she received was anonymous. To prevent her from recognizing him by his voice, he acted in silence. His face had changed so completely

that if one sought for an image of the assassin under the dead eyelids of the victim, one would have found only the unrecognizable features of a madman.

As the train rocked on, cradling her sorrow with a rough hand, she slowly grew calm. The demon that had come to her, the vanished incubus, had retired into the shadows of the upper berth. Under the night lamp, she found herself alone with flowers as in a tomb ; the vibration made the lilies nod their heads. The train passed through Chalons-sur-Marne with an almost human sigh. Again it gathered speed, and its dance became almost frantic between Toul and Nancy. It gave a rhythm to her thoughts and forged them into verses :

At first it is frightful, but then
It is nothing at all. . . .

Why was she heartbroken over this word "nothing" ? Had she then hoped for something ? Before the train reached Avricourt, she was asleep. She passed the frontier without waking. But the memory of the attack followed her into her dreams : she was dead and mourning for herself. Seeing her grief, Uncle Charles-Adolphe and M. Beau drew near. They looked at her sadly, and with such an air of reproach that she melted into tears.

CHAPTER II

The Polish Versailles

ON reaching Vienna, where the Leopolskis boasted of never having had a palace, Adam took his wife to the Hôtel Bristol. He led her past the tribunal of the famous concierge round whom the Austrian nobility were proud to gather. The evening before, at the Jockey Club, they had all arranged to meet in the lobby and watch her arrival. She passed between the double row of rattan chairs and metal ash-trays without knowing that she was giving a performance. In the space of one night and one morning, everything had become strange to her ; she had become a stranger to herself. The city, with its two-horse droshkies and its officers clanking their sabres, had another sound than Paris. The things she saw were not new ; they were old things which she did not know. She was really dead, as in her dream, and though she had survived her death, it was not in a better world.

That afternoon Adam left for the races—not because they amused him, but merely to break the rule which obliges a bridegroom to stay with his bride and not to appear in public without her. In the empty room Catherine fell to dreaming. She was surprised at having nothing to do ; marriage was a calamity, but it was not an occupation. She felt imprisoned by her thoughts. The worst of them, and the one which recurred most frequently, was shame. To escape them all, she went out. The doorman rushed up to

her: did she wish a carriage? Not being familiar with the city, she thought it best to ride, but she did not know where to go. She thought of the King of Rome, and asked to be driven to his tomb; it was the only address she knew.

In the Kapuzinerkirche, she followed a group of tourists who were descending into the crypt. They stopped for a moment before the tombs of the Habsburgs, but gathered in a circle to listen to the Capuchin friar only when they had reached the bronze casket which bore, in the midst of so many Karls, Franzes, Ludwigs, and Ferdinands, the exotic name of Napoleon. She drew near, offered a prayer, and murmured: "One thousand eight hundred and eleven!" as if she were telling her beads. Then, comforted, she climbed back into daylight.

She felt like continuing her drive, and her cabman asked nothing better. They rode through the city, whose streets, shops, squares, palaces, statues, posters, and even the dials of whose clocks, bore unknown names. Taking her for what she was, a foreigner, the driver turned half-round on his seat and pointed out the monuments with his whip. Thus she saw the Stephanskirche, and was astonished to find that its spire began so near the ground. It was indeed a cathedral, but it hugged the earth too closely. Instinctively she compared it with those of Chartres, Bourges, Amiens, Paris, and found that it lacked their sense of soaring flight.

The sun was sinking when she returned by the Schwarzenbergplatz to the Ring. By the dust and bustle of the streets, she could see that the crowd was returning from the races. A poor man ran after the carriage, offering her a bunch of lilies-of-the-valley. In this Austrian city she smelt the perfume

of the Bois de Chaville. She felt for her purse. The coin which she drew out seemed useless to the beggar ; it was a piece of French silver. As he continued to follow her, and as she did not know what to do, since she wished the flowers, her droshky, which had fallen in with the others, now drew up at the kerb. A stranger, whose carriage was standing a little distance from hers, made a sign to the flower merchant, gave him an Austrian piece, took the bouquet, and threw it skilfully at Catherine's feet. Had she then a friend in Vienna ?

When she returned to the hotel, she found a husband who had returned already, and who, for this reason, had lost his temper. Where had she been ? He had left her alone, thinking that she would like to rest, as any other woman would have done in her place after such a journey. And instead he was told by the doorman that she had been driving through the streets in a cab, and this in a city which she did not know, but where she was known. In Paris it would be of no importance, but in Vienna ! Such mad behaviour would ruin her. And to begin with, where did she get this ridiculous bouquet ? Had she bought it ? Why hadn't she told him that she wished to go out ? Twenty people would have been glad to send their carriages. Thank God, there were still a few of his relatives in the city . . . ! On their first day together, he was surprised to find that he was reproaching her instead of being reproached. Already she had gained the advantage, by depriving him of the pleasure of being guilty. Could he have guessed when he left her that she would do anything except to wait for him ? He thought immediately of sending for his mother, since he needed someone to be a companion for his wife. The idea of being a companion himself never entered his head. Unintentionally she had succeeded in

exasperating her husband. That night he possessed her once more, as punishment.

At Lemberg, the receptions began again. Adam was governor of the city, but his functions were performed by a vice-governor, his uncle, who surrendered the office whenever his nephew appeared.

Though in Paris he was merely an attaché, Adam was almost a king in his own province. The blue-and-pink hussars were formed into squares; bugles were sounded and drums were beaten. Bouquet after bouquet was piled up in Catherine's arms without regard for the flowers. In the square before the station, the trees were crowded with men. The bride and groom were harangued in German at the Town Hall, in Polish before the statue of the great Leopolski, in Latin on the steps of the cathedral. When they reached the governor's palace, Catherine was led to her apartment by her new uncle the Statthalter, who said confidentially: "Lemberg is a fine city—but what a fearful place to live!" Like others, he had spent his youth in Paris, and now regretted the follies which had cost him a fortune and his means for living there. Adam was always quick to exhaust the joys of his governorship. A single one of these banquets which lasted all day was enough for a year. He did not scruple to say: "My stomach is easily turned." Wishing to reach Zamosc that very day, he cut short the speeches. They left, not by the road, but by railway, since they had their own station at the end of the line. This terminus, a Leopolski station which served only for them, was one of their glories. After they had climbed from the train, crossed the red carpet, and hurried through the waiting-room where the Leopolskis never waited, they found the

Leopolski carriages drawn up in line. Adam's grandfather, who was believed by the peasants to be the inventor of railways, had so calculated his distances that the road from the station to the castle was just long enough to display the excellence of his stables. In a four-horse tandem, they passed through the gate of honour amid the *vivats* of their gatekeepers. The sun was sinking among the gardens. Already the immense courtyard was sleeping in the shade. By the monumental stairway which, designed for the passage of crowds, gave forth a paltry echo under the feet of a single couple, they climbed to the chamber of the Electoral Queen, which would henceforth be Catherine's. From the windows she could see the Tapis Vert and the Orangery; Zamosc was Versailles. Flatterers said: "A better Versailles, a Versailles without the French Revolution"; but it was also a Versailles without genius. Its lovely landscapes had the inherent sadness of copies. More lonely than the real Versailles, since it was open to the public neither Sundays nor weekdays, this palace rang hollow. The view from its windows was lacking in all the little figures that lend interest to eighteenth-century engravings; empty of walkers, the formal walks seemed lifeless. When the Leopolskis constructed this marvellous replica in the midst of the Galician plains, they had forgotten only one thing: even under Louis XIV, a Paris was needed in order to people Versailles. Surrounded by a domain of a hundred thousand acres, lost in an ocean of arable land, Zamosc was like a vessel shipwrecked on a desert island. Its generations of proprietors had gathered together all the distractions necessary to life: there was a menagerie in the park; there was a theatre in the château; there were series of engravings,

and there were curiosities of every sort ; one collection brought China to Zamosc ; another brought Italy or Holland ; and all of them proved that its inhabitants wished to create the illusion of being somewhere else. But nothing can re-animate a palace without a king. The loss of political power had emptied once and for all these stately avenues, which had ceased to serve as the approaches to a throne.

Catherine was interested in making a tour of this monument, but sleeping there was rather more difficult. She was embarrassed by so many allegories—and what a mob of cupids covered the walls of her bedroom ! Trumpet in hand, a group of vociferous children above the door had been announcing, to each successive countess of the last two hundred years, the entrance of her husband. Other cupids, mounted on he-goats, accompanied him as far as the bed. Still others followed him into the bed itself, jostling each other on the canopy against a background of dawn-coloured silk. Because the room was full of movement, it seemed to be full of noise. Apparently everything was designed to encourage the insomnia of love.

Deep in this haunted alcove with its regiments of cupids, seven wives in the course of two centuries had waited, sometimes for old husbands who came no longer, sometimes for young husbands who preferred other beds. Catherine was simply the eighth in a series. Adam was also one of a series, but he rebelled at the idea. He knew that all the retainers of Zamosc thought him obliged to penetrate that very night into the allegorical chamber. Therefore, he stayed in his own room. From the majordomo down to the dwarfs—for the Leopolskis kept dwarfs,

like the Braniskis—he was bent on disappointing all the household. Besides, he had already given Catherine sufficient tokens of a love which had ceased to exist. She passed a wakeful night behind the balustrade of her bed. Toward morning she dozed a little, and imagined on waking that she had been locked in this royal chamber as a punishment for not having obeyed the watchmen when they cried: “Closing time! All out!”

Their entrance to Zamosc was on Friday afternoon. Saturday morning, Adam took her to visit the stables. What with the kennels and the stud, there was enough to keep her busy till evening. Sunday, they attended services in the chapel, sitting in a gallery which resembled a box in a theatre. A glass partition installed by Adam’s father—who feared microbes more than death, and smells more than microbes—separated them from the rest of the congregation. All the peasants of the estate were admitted, by tradition, to High Mass in the castle. The afternoon was devoted to the greenhouses, where the gardeners, scraping and turning their backs to the flowers, presented their regiments of carnations and begonias. Then came the menagerie, where the trainer cracked his whip. Of country neighbours there were none; the domain of the Leopolskis was too vast. There were, indeed, at a distance of sixty leagues from Zamosc, some frightful second cousins whom they ridiculed; these were the Leopolskis of Perm, the “Permites”, the younger branch of the family, with whom the elder branch had quarrelled; the mother of these creatures had been impertinent enough to burn candles in all the churches of Lemberg and offer prayers that Adam might be a girl. Catherine found that once she had crossed the park, there

was nowhere else to walk. Zamosc was Versailles, but without the Trianon. On Monday she took her first lesson from the riding master. Then, for a week, the principal distraction which Adam offered her was to dine every evening in a different room, from a different service of china. One of the chief curiosities of Zamosc was this change of settings, invented by King Ladislaus, who was always bored at dinner. That evening they ate in the lacquer room, and from a service of pink Dresden; Tuesday they ate in the yellow room, from Delft; Wednesday in the green room, from old Vienna; Thursday in the blue room, from the light and the dark Sèvres; Friday in the red room, from Chinese porcelain; Saturday in the violet room, from Capo-di-Monte; and finally on Sunday, uniting the seven colours of the prism, they dined in the white room, from a service made in Berlin for the Shah of Persia. These porcelains proved the political sagacity of the Leopolskis, who had succeeded in preserving them unbroken through the Napoleonic wars and the revolution of 1831. No gold or silver plate was used at Zamosc for the simple reason that it was not fragile enough; all the Leopolskis had been fond of taking risks.

For a week, Zamosc afforded its new tenant all the usual diversions of historic palaces. In the salons were many of the chairs, console-tables, and mirrors that were saved from the pillage of Versailles; these were recognizable by their beauty. In Catherine's room was the clock which, on June 20th, 1789, had struck the hour of the Oath in the Tennis Courts. Elsewhere were collections of paintings and art-objects which had been made by people struggling in a lonely castle against their own fickleness and boredom.

But collections are amusing only in the making; afterwards they are like sporting prints without the sport. The sons of collectors inherit only the corpse of their fathers' satisfied passion.

After showing Catherine the whole inventory of Zamosc—except for the books, which he never touched—Adam left for Budapest to buy horses, avowedly. Horses he had already: from hunters and coach-horses down to the Shetland ponies which would continue to serve as mounts for the dwarfs until there were children to ride them, his stables contained something more than three hundred. But Adam was not very exacting in the matter of excuses. He knew by experience that all of them are equally bad to the woman one is leaving, so he did not try to make them seem convincing. He telegraphed for his mother and did not wait for her reply, being certain that she would rush back to Zamosc with all the haste of a fallen ministry which is being recalled to power. The trap of marriage was closing on Catherine alone.

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Wandering like Psyche in the palace of Love, without knowing love, she discovered the library. She thereby recovered both the dreams of her youth and the means of dreaming others. In this historic dwelling where nothing would ever belong to herself, not even her bedroom, which was that of the Electoral Queen, she at last possessed something. She plunged into reading like those adolescent boys who are heart-broken by their first experience, and seek for Woman in books after, alas, having found her! She besought the great poets to bring back the young man she had loved, the Adonis she now saw disfigured by

the monster in himself. Three days she wept for him in this deserted palace which echoed only to the soft tread of servants ; then, on the fourth day, she drove to the station to meet her mother-in-law, who was coming to instruct and console her.

The old Countess took pity on the young woman who had succeeded to her bed and her state of neglect. Not even two weeks ! She had not been able to keep him for two weeks ! Leonilla questioned her brutally : would she at least have a child ? In her ignorance, Catherine could tell her nothing. She learnt everything from her mother-in-law, who began by telling her that none of the Leopolskis was faithful ; if Adam had been an exception, they must have doubted the family—in other words, have ceased to believe in anything. There would be company at Zamosc the following week. Already the Russian family was announced. Adam's half-sister Anna Lvovkovitch, who had been kept from attending the wedding by the illness of one of her adopted sons, would be the first to arrive. Spanish friends, the Duke of Toledo and his household, which included comedians and gipsies, were announced for the month of August. In September the shooting season would open. During the winter Catherine would be presented at the court of Vienna, where there would be balls ; at the court of Russia, where there would be ballets ; and at the court of Germany, where there would be nothing at all, the emperor being insanely virtuous. . . . Paris ? Yes, she could return to Paris that autumn to order her gowns. The following summer she would visit the court of England. Ascot and the Cowes regatta were on her programme. But before all else, she must bear a son. This was very necessary the first year, and for several reasons—"First," said the old Countess,

checking them off on her fingers, "to discomfit our Permite cousins, who are eyeing the estate ; second, to strengthen your own position in the family ; and third, to insure us all against the loss of Zamosc."

Adam might die, and his stoical mother was not afraid to face the thought. Indeed, he might never have been born. She remembered the long impatient years during which she had waited for Adam, hoping for him in each of his sisters and obtaining him miraculously at last, within the legal period after his father's death. After taking so long to produce, would this miracle be reproduced ? The old Countess had faith in her own powers. First, however, she must make Catherine understand the importance of her mission, which was to transmit Zamosc ; to see the house remained in their House. This chit had shown entirely too little admiration for Zamosc. It was only by chance that she had been snatched from a dingy flat and transformed into the mistress of an almost royal domain, yet Catherine did not seem to be dazzled by her good fortune—either because she was too well bred to be astonished by anything, or else because she had the ill grace to regret her hovel. The old Countess knew that some people are led by an unhealthy preference for themselves to regard their birthplace as the loveliest spot in the world. For example, the old count's first wife had never really been fond of Zamosc. She was silly enough to prefer a Swiss chalet overlooking the Lake of Constance. Perhaps Catherine had the same sort of egoism ! She showed too little enthusiasm for this habitable Versailles, this Versailles with window-curtains ! Did she understand that an immense fortune was attached to the house ? Did she realize that fortune and house together would be irrevocably transferred to others

if Adam met with an accident? She would be its queen for life, if only she could charm her husband—between two absences, between two mistresses, between the season for grouse and that for woodcock—into reviving his passion and making her a mother.

“Once is enough!” said the old Countess, remembering that she had borne five children to a fickle husband who loved only Paris. “And I wasn’t even pretty,” she added boastfully.

In accordance with her mother-in-law’s instructions, Catherine refrained from vexing Adam with her entreaties; she let him go his way. He returned after three weeks of absence, with four teams of horses purchased in Hungary, and with a sad look which could only be that of a happy lover. He announced that he had invited Aunt Egypt and his seven cousins for the September shooting; they would arrive at the end of July. The old Countess said confidentially: “You are very lucky, my child! He has chosen one of the family.”

It seemed to Catherine that she was playing a part in some historical drama without knowing her lines.

The management of the household remained in the hands of her mother-in-law as before. Only in a few respects was the routine modified. The menu day by day, and the programme of entertainment week by week, were shown to the younger countess before being submitted to the elder. At dinner, the hostess’s place was abandoned to Catherine by the dowager, who instead took the chair at Adam’s right—a necessary concession which allowed her to whisper in his ear. The giant and dwarf of the Countess, who made a foursome with those of the count, also passed to Catherine. The keeping of these monsters was an institution dating from the time of King Ladislaus,

who, by the contrast of a very short and a very tall man, wished to show his people that only the Leopolskis had attained the happy medium.

The Leopolski retainers, who had hidden themselves during the honeymoon, now came out of their holes like cockchafers in May. There was Kubelick, the retired colonel who commanded the stable-boys; there was the canoness Freiherrin von Spitz, who had charge of the correspondence; there were the two Chevaliers Dombrowski, father and son, of whom the elder took care of the guests and the younger was master of hounds; there was Baron Pollack the assistant librarian, a Polish double of Abbé Mésange; there was Grüberlein the organist; there was the Countess's fencing master, il Com-mendatore Zucco. All these people had luncheon with the family, but were never seen to dine. The routine of Zamosc remained what it had been for thirty-eight years in the hands of the old Countess: the height of perfection, imitated with more or less success by several European courts.

At the end of June, the Russian relatives arrived. They were in flight from the long evenings of St. Petersburg and the midnight sunshine which kept the children from sleeping. They came to Zamosc seeking the charm of darkness. ^{And} Catherine began her Russian friendships.

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Princess Anna Lvovkovitch, the eldest of her sisters-in-law, had several pleasing qualities, among which were an overflowing heart and a joyous pessimism acquired from living with the Cossacks. Showered with riches and deprived of children, the good Anna had chosen a sort of general mother-

hood as her profession; she busied herself with child-rearing and orphanages. She had adopted her nephews, her husband, and even her father-in-law. She now took Catherine into her vast heart, as she had already taken the whole Russian people. Like a peasant woman, she walked with her hands on her hips; her blouses always buttoned in front like those of a nurse; and she wore enormous emeralds, which came from her own mines. She claimed to be one with her family, and in fact she never travelled alone. This year she had come to Zamosc with her three adopted sons, of whom she used to say that they were as good as good bread. They were at least the colour of bread, with their cheeks as white as crumbs and their hair a deep gold, like the crust. This appearance of goodness did not prevent them from indulging in all sorts of wild pranks, a few of which were cruel—like catching storks and sawing off their beaks to make them lose their sense of distance, or like painting white pigeons green so that their mates would peck at them viciously—but they did all this without ever ceasing to be mild, to pity their victims, and to forgive one another. At their coming, Zamosc was filled with the twang of Caucasian guitars, the wail of Russian hymns, and with a species of odorous rats brought from China by Cyril the sailor, who used to let them run down the marble stairway so that they would perfume all the house—much as the courtiers of Louis XIV had done at Versailles. The rest of the family consisted of the husband, who was aide to the Czar, and the father-in-law, a frail old man without whom they never travelled. All these people would gather round Princess Anna like mujiks round a stove. The warmth of her personality was like that of a brooding hen.

In this Russian sister-in-law, Catherine discovered the same sort of tenderness as in Angela the cook ; and the samovar of one, like the stove of the other, was a focus of activity. Princess Anna's apartment at Zamosc was the only one which had a warm odour of intimacy ; each year she brought her furs, her Turkish cushions, her samovar, her disorder, and succeeded in giving the Salon of Flora, which was quite as tiresomely formal as the Salon of Peace, the atmosphere of a Russian parlour steaming with tea. There, on the carpet, her adopted children would be rolling with their dogs ; at the desk, her husband would be answering letters ; and her father-in-law, bending over a table littered with papers, would be working on his secret memoirs of the reign of Alexander III.

Catherine found much to remind her of M. Beau in this white-haired diplomat who had become her friend. Between the conversation of a professor of history and that of a former chancellor, there was no more difference than exists between old wine and must. Catherine discovered that statecraft was only history in process of fermentation. Already accustomed to old vintages, she drank the new wine with curiosity. It was under the tutelage of Prince Lvovkovitch that she began to display an interest in contemporary politics which would later win her the confidence of several statesmen, all of them flattered to be given a place in such a lovely memory. He introduced her to the play of European alliances. Her own knowledge of the subject had extended no farther than the Holy Alliance, with which the political action of the "*Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*" comes to a close. As for modern history as taught by M. Beau, it had carried her only to the Treaty of Frankfort,

signed in the melancholy spring of 1871. Old Lvovkovitch, who was a nephew of the famous Nesselrode and a confidant of the late Czar, had recently consented, in view of certain possibilities, to be Russian ambassador in Constantinople. Out of his vast knowledge, he was able to continue the novel of Europe and to make his sequel as interesting to Catherine as "Twenty Years After" and "The Vicomte de Bragelonne" have proved to readers of "The Three Musketeers". The Salon of Flora became the scene of long discussions.

Catherine felt happy there. Without entirely understanding why she was to be pitied, she was grateful for the pity she received. Commiseration was a principal element in the charm of the Russian family; they sighed indiscriminately for friends, enemies, and the whole world. "Poor" was a word which they used to qualify people and things without distinction of species. Whether a man was good or evil, he could be sure of receiving pity instead of praise or blame. Princess Anna would say in one breath: "Russia, that poor immensity!" and: "My maid, poor Céline!" As for her husband, he was in daily contact with the man he pitied most of all—the Czar.

Adam failed even to notice the daily absences of Catherine, who was spending all her mornings in Russia. Sometimes she took notes for the old prince; sometimes she played with the children; sometimes she wrote letters to Uncle Charles-Adolphe, Madam Princess, or M. Beau, now that she had something to tell them. The tenderness of the Russian family restored her confidence in her own ability to please—even after what had happened—and thus gave her strength to withstand that disgust for herself which, every day, she felt on hearing her mother-in-law's

questions and observing her husband's mysterious indifference. She did not believe that either love or friendship could survive what had taken place between them—that terrible and necessary act which had given Adam a look of bitterness never to be effaced.

She took refuge in the maternal arms of Anna Lvovkovitch. With the children she sought to win back her lost gaiety ; with the old prince she sought an occupation for her mind, and found it in the story of the revolutions which he had prevented. In this friendly company she forgot her solitary vigils in the chamber of the Electoral Queen, behind the gilded balustrade which defended the bed, where she lay straining her ears, trembling when she heard the woodwork cracking, fearing the event which she should have desired most eagerly, terrified lest Adam, with his murderous face, was coming to wound her once more. The short hours of the nights sounded faintly from the clock which had marked the time of the Oath in the Tennis Courts. The distant song of nightingales, lost in the tall hedges surrounding the Tapis Vert, suggested the empty spaces of the French garden ; and the barking of hungry dogs outside the huts of the Polish peasants revealed to the listener that she was not in a park between Paris and Chartres, but in the centre of a plain dotted with miserable villages, in the heart of Galicia. She knew that in the morning, as she went to luncheon, the pitiless dowager would ask her : "How did you sleep ?" and she knew that the unspoken answer would be : "No !"

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A month passed ; the old Countess consulted her calendar. At the end of July they would have the

Austrian family ; then, on August 15th, the German family. The Russian family was good for nothing : only an old man, a pious husband, and children too young for her purpose. Anna Lvovkovitch had been so guileless as to reproach her brother tenderly for his neglect of Catherine ; since then he had grown obstinate. He no longer even attended the riding lesson. Catherine had ridden out alone with the riding master for the first time. She had taken a four-barred gate without Adam's being there to admire her horsemanship. Under these conditions, it was absolutely necessary that someone pay court to her, in such a way as to attract her husband's attention. What could be expected of the new guests ? Ferdinand Auersburg was certainly not of a stature to excite Adam's jealousy. The Duke of Toledo would arrive on the fourth of August for the trap-shooting contest, but the Marquise of Modana was coming with him. However, women like her would serve their purpose ; they would be the first to scent danger, and by giving voice, to turn the pack against Catherine ; then the men would grow excited in their turn. The old strategist thought to herself : "Let us wait till September." There would then be thirty sportsmen in the castle, the pick of Europe. Knowing her son, the mother hoped at best for a lasting quarrel interrupted by a momentary reconciliation.

Adam, for his part, had avoided marriage for nineteen years, and it was only natural that he should also avoid the duty which marriage implies. Everything one could say to him about the need for continuing his family only encouraged his dereliction. The spirit of contradiction which had ruled him since his birth was tempting him to interrupt this procession from father to son, of which he was utterly

weary. He wished to consider himself, not as a mere bridge between one Leopolski and another, but rather as an independent being, an end and a goal in himself. Ah, but he would hate his children, if ever he had any! No one in his family had ever seen him as the determined and irreplaceable creature he desired to be, and sometimes was, if only for his mistresses. For his mother, what had he represented since his birth, if not a means of remaining wealthy and an excuse to rule? He had loved Catherine—but what had they made of her? An instrument for carrying out their plans; a creature by whose aid they expected to procure someone to take his place, when the time came, in the affections of all the household. The servants, even, were hiding behind doors to watch the procreation of his rival. Against this mysterious conspiracy which threatened his individual existence, the only existence dear to him, he had a single refuge: Roji, the wild, the dark, the true. With her, at least, you could struggle for your pleasure. No offence was taken. But this other, who looked at you with her proud eyes . . . without your knowing how you had wounded her, and whether in her body or her soul . . .

CHAPTER III

The Best Guns of Europe

IN September came a crowd of guests described as "guns", a name which made Catherine laugh. Men and women, they were "the best guns of Europe". Each night a printed programme for the morrow's entertainments was distributed from room to room. There was a concert, a ball, or a play every evening ; there was shooting every morning. After the last drive of game, which ended at two o'clock, the guns had their choice of golf, tennis, or polo. The pleasure of pursuing birds was followed by that of pursuing balls—a vivid illustration of their need for running after something which tried to escape. Catherine took part in these new sports to obey her mother-in-law. She would have to go the pace, or else run the danger of being outdistanced by Roji, who shot her three hundred cartridges a day like a man, followed Adam to the links like a caddy, and every evening clacked her heels like a gipsy in those mad Hungarian dances at the end of which the dancer pretends to limp, in order to show that she is wounded.

Accordingly Catherine marched into the woods disguised as a "gun". The men were moved at seeing her in their midst, dressed in garments as rough as theirs without her resembling the huntsmen in the least ; whereas the other women—English, German, Hungarian, Austrian—resembled them exactly. She

went to the woods without arms, as Joan of Arc went to battle, and she killed nothing. At her first drive, she was terrified by hearing a sound like that of a mob in the underbrush. Little hares with asses' ears came fleeing from the beaters; pheasants and partridges came whirring overhead with a noise like the wind. Finally, from between the trees, appeared ruffians armed with clubs. She thought they were Sansculottes. Ten paces away, they stopped. It was the first time she had seen peasants near at hand. These in particular seemed hideous, since, before beating the woods, they had covered themselves with the sort of rags they could afford to leave on the briars. Her first impression was so strong that it proved lasting, and each time she heard the coming of the beaters, she imagined that she was listening to the howls of a people in revolt against their lords. A burst of firing along the line replied to their distant imprecations; but as soon as they approached, the aristocrats surrendered, letting the weapons drop from their hands. This pantomime of rebellion made her shiver. And similarly all Zamosc, with its furnishings saved from the shipwreck of Versailles, with its periwigged flunkies and its eighteenth-century atmosphere, infected her with the sadness which sensitive imaginations feel at the sight of survivals from before the Revolution.

At the dinner-table, however, her apprehension at living amid the rumours of wars and revolutions was even greater than in the woods. Zamosc, because of her presence, had unexpectedly become the scene of a political event—something which it had not been since the abdication of King Ladislaus. Everyone knew that old Lvovkovitch, whose appointment as Russian ambassador to the Porte had just been

announced, was prolonging his visit because of her. Baron Aerenthal, then foreign minister of Austria, found it convenient to visit Zamosc, presumably for the hunting—he was indeed a good shot, though left-handed—but really to bring Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Habsburg dominions. On hearing this, Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria and his brother Duke Philip, who had been shooting over their Hungarian estates, shifted their guns to the other shoulder and marched off to visit the Leopolskis. The table over which Catherine presided seemed to be that of a European congress. The German Empire was represented by one of its federated sovereigns, brother Ernest ; the Vatican, by the Papalina and her Roman prince ; Austria and Russia, by their plenipotentiaries on vacation ; the Balkans, by their most typical ruler—for, although Ferdinand's father was German and his mother French, he himself, by a curious example of royal anthropomorphism, had become the perfect type of Balkan statesman. Great Britain had sent three of its lords, in addition to Sir Philip Gay, the councillor of the Paris embassy. Paris itself was absent from the conference. However, since these polyglots teased Catherine for being able to speak no other language than French, and since they called her "Paris" for short, or "Our Lady of Paris", in order to distinguish her from the German Catherine, who was there with her husband, they all decided that she should be France. She too, they added, was the *confidante* of Russia.

Old Lvovkovitch was making no attempt to disguise his feelings. His love for Catherine was one of those senile passions which, because they will bear no mortal offspring, are mindful neither of appearances, on which they thrive, nor of the non-existent future.

Each day he claimed the right of seeing her in private. Each morning he sent her a note comparing her to Hebe, Diana, Minerva, and all the abstractions men have invented in order to replace women, who can be loved only for a time, with the radiant ideas which can be loved for ever. Catherine also, like her mother in times past, was having verses written in her honour, but they were not those of a schoolboy; instead they were composed by an ambassador as lovesick as any schoolboy could have been.

Soon his place was disputed. As happens with every young woman who is set apart by being obviously forsaken, her unhappiness attracted that of others. The men about her were transformed into rivals. The oldest were the most desperate; they were gamblers without money. She was amused by the childishness which she led them to display, for it brought them nearer to herself. Instinctively she was rebuilding the world of her girlhood, when she had been happy among old men. She began to play golf with the English diplomat; she learnt to play tennis with Aerenthal. In later years, when this name was regarded in Europe as that of an audacious minister who had annexed two provinces and deceived Russia, she would remember only a man in white flannels and a bright pink shirt who brandished a racket with his left hand as he cried, "Your service!" when it was her turn to play, and "At your service!" when it was his. For Aerenthal also was paying court to her; it was a favourite expression of her mother-in-law's to say that he "surrounded" her—and Leonilla Leopolska wished her not only to be surrounded, but to live in the centre of a living hedge, the prisoner of her success.

It would have taken a great many suitors to keep

her from seeing Adam, who had practically announced his choice of a mistress. Both heredity and the plan of his château had encouraged him to commit this royal indiscretion. At Zamosc there were no electric bells, none having existed at Versailles in the reign of Louis XV. Each bedroom was entered through an antechamber, which was barred at night. In each antechamber was stationed a servant, to be summoned by clapping one's hands. "We applaud our servants at Zamosc, and we are wrong," the Papalina used to say. In order to visit Roji, Adam had to cross a desert of echoing floors. He never returned till daybreak. "Let them live their life!" thought Mother Egypt, still burdened with her seven robust daughters, for whom a Bluebeard was still to be found. Under-estimating Catherine's health and confusing her delicacy with fragility, the baroness stared into the coffee grounds, an old habit of hers, and there saw Adam as a widower leading a triumphant Roji to the altar. Why not? After all, Fate had brought them together only a few weeks too late. The daughter, intoxicated with love and ambition, shared this hope of saving Egypt. For, although Zamosc had been disappointing to a girl not only familiar with the real Versailles, but trained in addition by professors who had no respect for worldly riches, it was still the idyllic dream of a little Hungarian schooled in the hierarchies of Budapest.

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Catherine heard every detail of the interviews which would afterwards be recorded in European chancelleries, under the date of September 6th, 1907, as the "Conversations of Zamosc". In these, Aerenthal failed to win approval for his annexations; he

would succeed only after a year had passed, and only with Isvolski as a Russian colleague instead of old Lvovkovitch. She would later remember the arguments with which the former adviser of Alexander III opposed his rival's project. "Aerenthal wishes to change words because he is unable to change things," he told her. "He hopes to annex something which he cannot really possess. . . . One doesn't conquer provinces with adverbs. . . . The Austrian army is foreign legion in which nobody volunteers. . . ." She would also remember a phrase which Lvovkovitch repeated often: "The natural allies of Russia are Serbian pigs and Serbian plums, which are seeking a road to the Adriatic. . . ." She was learning the gospel of Balkan politics, in which blossoming plum-trees run headlong into the sea, driven by the porcine demons of the Scriptures. As for Prince Ferdinand, who was hoping to learn whether Europe, after failing to recognize him as a prince, would acknowledge him as a king, he now left Zamosc in fury. Ernest of Saxe-Schlossenbad, the recognized prince of a few hundred beer-swillers, had been given precedence over himself, the unrecognized despot of the Bulgars!

After the October shooting came that of November, bringing with it other gunners, longer guns, and even more desolate landscapes. It took place in the marshes, which could be reached only by special train. From Zamosc to the reedy lakes of Imsk, the distance was a little less than sixty miles, across a wilderness without roads. The guns had to rise at dawn. At midnight they returned to sup by candle-light. Navigation in the marshes was by means of fire-blackened dugouts. With a fisherman in the stern, the hunters paddled in couples to blinds among

the reeds. To spend long hours there, like savages in ambush, was a favourable opportunity for lovers, though only men and women still untouched by rheumatism could venture this sort of amusement. There were no witnesses except the birds that passed in rapid clouds, and the half-naked guide who plunged into the water after each volley. He was a better retriever than any dog, and his presence was hardly more embarrassing.

It was in one of these lacustrine shelters, where they sat on bundles of blood-spattered reeds, that Catherine saw, for the first time, her brother-in-law the margrave sink down at her feet. His eyes were filled with a crystalline liquid. He stammered, "Somebody loves somebody else. . . ." Catherine could make nothing of his incoherent speech, unless he meant that Adam was culpably forsaking her for Roji, and that Ernest, in consequence, was proposing to forsake the margravine for herself, though without allowing the affair to become public. What affair? Catherine was stupefied. Undiscouraged, he added that if she so desired, she might have a son by him. . . . The next time she went to the marshes, she asked Chevalier Dombrovski, who had charge of these arrangements, to assign her another companion. The exchange was not to her profit. She was given Count Fritz Khoun, who, finding himself alone with her in a nest of reeds, and believing that she had chosen him deliberately, tried his fortune also. Thus, before the end of her first shooting season, she realized that she herself had become a quarry. She learnt that Adam's betrayal consisted, above all else, in making her fair game, like a bird set loose in the desert of the world.

The old Countess was displeased by Catherine's

energy in defending herself; Adam could never be won in this fashion. The necessary outburst of jealousy, on which everything now depended, was hardly to be provoked by corresponding with old Lvovkovitch, by turning the heads of greybeards, and by frightening off her younger admirers. Absence, a philtre of recognized virtue, might prove more effective. It was easy to divine that Catherine was homesick. Paris would serve as a possible rival to Adam. The old Countess had little difficulty in convincing her that it was time to order new gowns, and that she had best instal herself in the Ile Saint-Louis for the remaining weeks of autumn. The dressmaking season had come, along with the season for woodcock. Every year Adam went alone to the borders of Podolia, where, with a few male companions, he was accustomed to stalk these crotchety birds, whose veering flight is so disconcerting to women.

CHAPTER IV

The Equinox of Dressmakers

BETWEEN the fleeing wife and the mother-in-law who was encouraging her flight, it was understood that Catherine's visit to Paris should be longer than the dressmakers required. Summoned back, she would find several excuses for not returning ; expected, she would break her word several times. Finally, after a series of delays, she would appear at Zamosc like a stranger in strange garments. Adam was still regarded by his mother as a little boy who ate nothing unless it was forbidden him. Spurred on by her need for assuring the possession of Zamosc to her descendants, the old Countess had formed the heroic project of making her son jealous of Paris. She herself had been jealous of the city in times past. She knew that as winter approached, Parisians deprived of Paris fell to gasping like fish out of water ; she was counting on this asphyxia and was following its progress in Catherine with an attentive eye. She knew the disease from experience, having spent a lifetime in observing its effects on her husband and her sisters-in-law. In October, when French vacations end, the symptoms of this strange malady begin to be visible in its victims : they yawn in the midst of pleasures. They find nothing to attract them in the scenes which for Londoners, Viennese, Berliners, Petersburgers, and the inhabitants of European capitals in general, are a sort of earthly paradise : namely, in fine country

houses surrounded with game preserves. With spring, still other symptoms appear. It is an old saying of vintners that corks pop in the cellars when the grape-vines are in blossom. Like bottled wine, people who suffer from Paris fever begin to ferment in May. Like particles of iron, they are drawn to the magnet ; like salmon, they migrate up the Seine ; they seek the city which gives them life ; and, if they are held back, they show their loyalty by still adhering, in spite of distance, to all the hundred little revolutions of Paris, which renew and revivify the world by changing the form of women.

As she closed the heavy gilt door of the Electoral Queen and hurried through the antechamber, where giant and dwarf kept watch in turn, Catherine felt the fresh wind of liberty passing through her hair. She thought of Henri de Valois, King of Poland, who with stifled laughter deserted his throne one night and was driven headlong back to the Louvre. Like him, she made no stops. Her secret joy found its accompaniment in the song of the rails :

When Catherine rides horseback to Paris,
She gallops, she gallops, she gallops !

Henceforth she would speak of leaving Zamosc as "playing Henri III". She was frightened at being so jubilant ; when one is eighteen, it is dangerous to value yesterday above to-day and to-morrow. Her future did not lie in France ; of this she was certain. What impulse sent her flying toward Avricourt and the frontier as if love itself were waiting at the Gare de l'Est . . . ? The Papalina accompanied her on the journey. This enormous creature was passionately interested in matters of dress. Every autumn and every spring, she devoted several weeks to self-

adornment, making her purchases in department stores, the *grands magasins*, which are the antithesis of the *grandes maisons*; for she was no less parsimonious than vain. Careless of her dignity, she boasted of buying her gowns for practically nothing. "I want to wear clothes that don't make faces at me, and they're not so easy to find!" she used to say. Only the Paris needle-trades could accomplish this miracle. She made fun of her sisters, one of whom—the Royal Highness—ordered her clothes from the Rue de la Paix, but only by mail, while another encouraged local industry by patronizing the dress-makers of Vienna. The case was different with the eldest and the youngest: Princess Anna, so her sisters claimed, bought her clothes in workmen's co-operatives, and the question of dress did not even exist for the prioress. The old Countess, for her part, had no errands for them in Paris; she had adopted riding habits once and for all, and bought them in London. Since the death of the count, who had made her a sort of riding master, she wore nothing but broadcloth and long, tight-fitting coats. Her evening gowns also were raised at one side and showed her knee.

Having left the Leopolski preserves on a Thursday; having passed through Lemberg, the Carpathians, the Duchy of Austria, Vienna from station to station Linz, and Salzburg without stopping, Catherine had only to spend five hours of darkness in Germany, and a few hours of dawn and daylight in France, before she set foot on the pavements of Paris. As she emerged from the Gare de l'Est, she seemed to be waking from a dream, and also to be escaping from an unknown danger which she had run without understanding how. In a country which could be found on no map, she had plunged backwards into

time ; in a Polish castle she had slept no less than a hundred and fifty years on the first night, and perhaps two hundred and fifty years on the second ; she had wakened to find herself in the power of people whose lives and thoughts were of the *Ancien Régime*. Her husband was Louis XV, a pretty fellow bored with everything ; her mother-in-law was tormenting her as Richelieu had tormented Anne of Austria before her reconciliation with the King, and for the same reasons. Margrave Ernest wished to be Buckingham ; he had proposed that she bear a child by him, and this when they were hidden in the marshes, on a bed of reeds, under conditions which must have marked the reproduction of the earliest lake-dwellers. Yes, she was indeed returning from a journey into the past ! Paris alone could restore her to the present and to consciousness.

The two sisters-in-law drove to the Quai d'Alençon, where Abbé Mésange was waiting to receive them. Seeing the aspen-trees once more, Catherine gave a little joyous shiver which was of happy augury. Could it then be true that Adam had no share in the delicious alarm she had felt that April day ? Always she had believed this to be the spot where her love had been wakened. Yet to-day, as she approached the window alone, she thrilled with the same sort of pleasure. She leaned forward and put each thing in its place, with a glance which embraced them all. The Seine flowed in a triangle between the bridge of St. Louis and that of Louis Philippe ; its apex was under the bridge of Arcola. Above the weather-vanes of St. Gervais, Notre-Dame, and the Pantheon, a giddy sky was whirling. The spaces between the monuments were filled with grey apartment-houses which, though of an ordinary type, were lovelier

than those of any other city ; on their bare façades, as on a lithographer's stone, it is written that they are the houses of Paris. She could not explain her joy ; she merely felt it. The continuous hum of the city charmed her ears, which had so long been deafened by the howls of men and dogs, by the fusillades of Zamosc, and even more, perhaps, by its deathly silences. It was a clean and delicious pleasure to walk in the streets, after driving through the enormous dust or mud of Poland, where all their journeys had ended with a butchery. She was reconquering her city on foot.

Her arrival in the Rookery was joyous with an overtone of sadness, like incidents in the Gospels after the Resurrection. The servants recognized her and raised their arms to Heaven. Already she had ceased to be part of this world where once she was loved. She had passed a mysterious barrier ; she had come again, but everyone knew that she could not stay. When the lamplighter made his rounds, she was seated at the rosewood table between Madam Princess and M. Beau. It was like the days of old, but it was not like to-day. Nothing could keep them from regarding her as a vision. She had come, indeed, from so far a country that they dared not ask what she had seen, nor what were her adventures.

She herself did not break the silence, as if she feared to frighten them by even the least of the stories she might have told. She had not reflected on what she was going to say, believing that to see them again would be a simple matter. She now perceived that her own place had been taken by their memories of her, and that she would be powerless to drive them out of it. She was returning like those who should never have gone, and who cannot make this

confession to those who let them go. She did not dare to tell her grandmother that the horror she predicted had not softened into habit ; nor to tell M. Beau that she lived like a queen of France with a recognized mistress under the same roof ; nor to tell Uncle Charles-Adolphe that one doesn't marry a Pole ; nor to tell them all that she had taken refuge in the sympathy of an old man, having tasted love and found that only friendship was to be valued. Instead she forced herself to describe Zamosc, with its furnishings saved from the pillage of Versailles, with its curiosities, its dwarfs and giants, its seven dining-rooms, one for each day of the week, its collections of porcelains, and its library, to which she had the key ; but the more she continued this list of riches, the more she felt that she was drawing away from them, was making herself a stranger ; till at last the words died on her lips. What did such things matter to them ! She was giving them a catalogue, and meanwhile it was her heart they wished to know. In that other world, which had become hers, was she happy ? To this unspoken question, she could answer nothing. She had been asked to give her soul for the preservation of a provincial museum : had she then consented to the bargain ?

Of her husband, what could she tell them ? She said that he was shooting, and that was all. Then, she described what shooting was. Madam Princess had ceased to knit ; she was listening and looking within her, with her eyes closed to the present, open to the past. She heard the coming of the drive ; in the distance were shouts and imprecations. The peasants, thin as wolves, were forcing the beasts from the wood. She heard the furtive movements of hares in the underbrush and the prudent steps of foxes. The

first volley nailed them to the spot. It was death flying at random, before them, behind them, never at their side. There was the stale brimstone-smell of powder ; there were empty shells strewing the dead leaves like flowers—to be plucked next day by the gamekeeper's children, for their odour. The drive !—the autumn manœuvres of the *Jacquerie*—the riots organized by great magnates, that curious breed of men existing all over Europe who live to hunt because their ancestors hunted to live, and thus perpetuate, for their amusement, a sort of warfare which was rendered for ever useless by the invention of the abattoir and the poultry yard. . . . After describing the October shooting, Catherine spoke of killing wildfowl in the marshes. The Rookery was filled with the murmurs of the *Miroslava* reeds. The ball of wool fell from Madam Princess's knees with the sound of a duck brought down by an invisible hunter ; the yarn which had been knitted into so many stockings, and had been so often unravelled, broke ; the old woman's heart was no longer strong enough to break, but her hands opened. In the darkness of the little parlour, three people were silent : M. Beau was groping for the lost yarn ; Uncle Charles-Adolphe was drumming with his fingers on the table. The lamplighter passed. Merely by showing his blue smock at the window, he drove away the phantoms. The reassuring gaslight supplied by the City of Paris streamed in from the street. Carriages rolled past, shaking the window-panes. This vibration put the inhabitants of the Rookery in sympathy with their fellow citizens, who were being carried by these vehicles toward their work, their pleasures, their comfortable habits. Madam Princess sought for her granddaughter's head at her knee, failed to find it, and took her hand instead. Stroking

it softly, she murmured : "You must live on the Ile Saint-Louis, my dear. And if they don't wish you to live there, well . . . you must tell them 'Turlututu, a fig for you . . . !' "

To Catherine fallen among barbarians, she offered the only remedy she knew for the brutality of men—Paris.

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The aspen leaves went drifting down the river, and autumn, in the Ile Saint-Louis, took on the Gothic look of winter. The city became an etching, a sort of anatomical plate ; its lungs were the lovely trees, black with arterial blood, which were ramified against a smoky sky.

Catherine was leading two lives : that of women who buy their clothes in the Rue de la Paix, and the very different life of her own Quarter. At home, she adopted all the habits of an old gentleman she had never seen—her father-in-law, whose room overlooking the Seine like a ship's bridge was the one she had chosen to occupy. There she strode up and down like a captain on board his vessel, watching the movements of the tugboats and barges, gazing with curious eyes at the fishermen that lined the two banks of the river, and smiling at the pleasant ways of the lovers who, from the crowded tenements of this Quarter, were drawn to the tip of the island by a sense of the infinite. She spent long hours at the windows ; she dreamt there ; she came there to read, to drink her morning coffee, and to reflect on life. Her eyes played over the prow of her galley where it cut the waves. Here was a trysting place, to say nothing of a sand-pile full of seductive odours and possible mud-pies, which attracted dogs and

children at their hours. An old abbé, probably a canon of St. Gervais, for he came from that direction, would pace up and down while he read his breviary. He appeared at the stroke of three, except on rainy days—thus resembling the monks that pop out of some barometers when the sun is shining. From pre-occupied visitors like these, she had nothing to fear. But sometimes a stranger would raise his eyes to the window, catch sight of her, and shorten his steps. She would then draw back a little, till her face was drowned in shadow. Since the time when Adam, like a cat tired of its plaything, had let her slip from his grasp, she had taken a dislike to being watched.

One morning it happened that two young men passed by, arm in arm. They were arguing with the vehemence of Frenchmen just out of the university. Their hats were pushed back, showing their smooth foreheads. The elder, who limped, seemed to be leading on the other. Suddenly they lost interest in their discussion, and impelled by that ocular force which obliges one to see because one is being seen, they raised their eyes toward the magnetic window. They stood there spellbound for a moment, like reasoners suddenly deprived of reason. Then, the younger made a gesture, the one by which men recognize the presence of death or a power superior to themselves: he raised his hat. Catherine barely had time to smile before closing the window.

The Papalina wrote a facetious account of her visit to Paris. "I am leaving for Rome," she told her mother; "the Pope is growing impatient. Tell Adam to keep an eye on his wife. Crowds gather in the Quai d'Alençon when she shows herself at the window. I take her place, and immediately the crowds melt away. What will happen when I am gone? Abbé

Mésange is wondering and will answer for nothing, as usual."

The month of November ended with races, plays, sales, exhibitions, and all the little events that make Paris an immense fraternity. Meanwhile the news from Zamosc was uncertain. Adam was shooting over his more distant estates, which lay on the borders of Hungary. It seemed probable that Roji had rejoined him. The old Countess could see no other remedy than to let the situation grow worse ; she wrote that Roji was good for a year, the way things were going. Generally, in calculating the length of a liaison, Mme Leopolska disregarded the love of the man. She made no distinction between a lover and a stag of the forest. In her plans for dis severance, she allowed only for the resistance of the woman. She thought of moral phenomena in physiological terms, and thanks to this method made few mistakes. She believed that the union of a man and a woman always produces, in default of a child, that ghost of a child which they call their love. This imaginary offspring, like the real, is carried only by the woman, and is delivered at the moment of parting, when, in the midst of tears and moans, everything ends with a painful operation which only the woman suffers. The old Countess knew that there are weak women who lose their love before its time, and strong women who rid themselves of it ; still others are permanently injured, and there are a few whose weak constitution leads to their death in this invisible child-bed, as witness that silly creature Guyon. But the little Hungarian was robust and self-willed ; she would carry her burden to the very end ; and when her time came at last, she would be dangerous to others. Catherine, however, was the mother's principal worry.

Would she be strong enough to triumph over Roji when the other had grown weak ; or must they wait till another Roji had come and gone ? She, Leonilla Leopolska, must find weapons for this incapable girl who refused to fight. The disdainful Parisian must be driven to the chase. Did she realize that because she was Adam's legitimate wife, she had lost all colour, all hold on his imagination ? How could she be re-magnetized ? What tactics could they use to make him jealous ? It was easy enough to prove, and perhaps it was true, that Catherine preferred Paris to Galicia, and hence, to Adam himself. But would this be enough to make him desire her, even for a moment ? The old Countess herself had been jealous and scornful of the mistress-city as of a detested rival with whom any tricks are fair, but this was only because she loved Zamosc. In order to retain this matchless prize, she had tricked an indifferent husband into giving her a son. And now, all her work would have to be done over ! To succeed in this difficult enterprise, one must have the strength, not of a great love, but of a great ambition. . . . Catherine was too indifferent to the Polish Versailles ; herein lay the secret of her probable defeat. . . . She could win back her husband more easily if she ceased to love him. It was only when this wary runner was off his guard that he could be overtaken ; he must not be warned, and love always betrays its intentions. The old Countess racked her brains for methods of restoring Catherine's lost magnetism. . . . Would it be best to flatter Roji's hopes and lead her to believe that a repudiation was possible ? This would make her try to ruin Catherine, and hence, by the seesaw of contradictions, would cause Adam to think his wife desirable. It was worth

trying, the dowager reflected. And she drew up her double programme for the season: first she would stimulate the ambition of the little Hungarian; and then, by creating a European reputation for Catherine, she would make Adam jealous for new reasons. Foreign courts were the ideal theatre for her plan; the marriage visits would serve as a pretext. She would encourage her daughter-in-law to become what she easily could be—a new Pauline von Metternich, with wit and beauty in addition. Knowing this princess, Mme Leopolska accused her of having neither one nor the other. It might easily be that Adam, at the sight of this universal homage, would feel the need of humiliating the conqueress in secret, and would employ for this purpose the most effective means of inflicting shame on women—that of possessing them lovelessly.

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Three imperial invitations reached the Ile Saint-Louis almost simultaneously. Catherine learnt that she was to be presented to the emperor of Vienna on New Year's Day, to him of Berlin on the twenty-eighth of January, and to him of St. Petersburg on the twenty-fifth of the same month, old style. She was afterwards to visit Schlossenbad, where a court ball would be given in honour of the young couple. Here, instead of filing past to be received with the other courtiers, Catherine herself would be a witness of the procession. She ordered the regulation costumes, one with a train five yards long, and one with a train five and a half yards long, as prescribed respectively by Russia and Germany—"which could no more agree on this question than on any other," said the Papalina. Francis Joseph, an easy-going monarch,

would be satisfied with an evening gown. His court was much less formal than the others, its prestige being sufficiently assured by its greater age. However, the shoulders must be bare, failing which the master of ceremonies was authorized to intervene and, like a court-martial, to snip off the shoulder-straps.

"Queen of the Mardi Gras," thought Catherine at her dressmaker's as she gathered in her train. She had the attitude of the Paris mob toward the pomp of kings. The carnival processions, with their burlesque of majesty, their floats covered with purple and ermine, their royal honours to a butcher's ox, had made the republic possible in the land of Louis XIV. All over France, the pomp of royalty is reserved for corpses; the only draped carriages are those of the undertaker; the court of Louis XV survives in funerals only; and there are no queens except in a carnival. . . . Having procured her court gowns, with tails like fishes and plumes like those of a hearse, Catherine waited without impatience for her mother-in-law's instructions. Meanwhile she took the opportunity to live her own life and to wander through Paris in the company of Abbé Mésange, whose friendship only continued that of Uncle Charles-Adolphe and M. Beau.

This priest, who was charitable enough to be gay, had thereby gained a dangerous reputation for wit. His long services with the Leopolskis, who gave an eighteenth-century air to everything about them, had also contributed to his being mistaken for one of those intriguing abbés that crowded the court of Louis XV. Nothing was further from his nature. This Socrates whom the ages had transformed into a Jesuit, this Nazarene who dined with the publicans of Paris, was taken for a fool by the fools in authority.

He was accused of making terms with vice, merely because he approached it like a doctor specializing in contagious diseases; and he was misunderstood by men because he understood them. The task of resigning Catherine to her fate had been left in his hands by the old Countess, and he would fulfil it to the best of his ability. He would distract her from melancholy; he would demonstrate that there was nothing exceptional in her marital adventures. All husbands, he told her, grow tired of their wives either sooner or later, and the second case is even more tragic. It is better not to seek for happiness in marriage, where one is almost certain not to find it.

To comply with the wishes of the old count, who had left him a legacy for that purpose, Abbé Mésange was writing a history of the island. He studied its sentimental geography with Catherine. The concierges of the neighbourhood grew accustomed to the visits of this pair, who would stop before a house and pronounce other names than those of the present lodgers. At No. 13 Quai de Bourbon, they asked for Philippe de Champaigne; at the end of the Quai d'Anjou, they sought Voltaire; standing before the Hôtel de Pimodan, they announced that Charles Baudelaire had there received the visits of Théophile Gautier; at the corner was the house where young Arvers had written his famous sonnet. Through that sunlight of the dead which is called literature, the abbé guided the young soul entrusted to his care. The loves of the dead are a cold flame, in which he taught her to seek light and healing. He had been unable to help when Adam swooped down to clutch her, with the guilty aid of a family which would profit by her ruin; but now that she was

temporarily released, he took it upon himself so to generalize her disappointment as to render it universal. The knowledge of the human heart which he had gained from a thousand confessions was summarized in his two favourite sayings: "The whole world is crazy!" and "Everything is a failure!" For him the epitome of the human adventure could be found in "*Bérénice*", that tragedy of Racine's which ends with the word "Alas!" One should reach this conclusion as soon as possible. Afterwards, it was permissible to love—that is, to worship God in the pleasures of the mind, which are his outermost manifestation. "One should make one's life a mosaic," he used to say. "Let the general design be good, the colours lively, and the materials diversified. . . ." A woman should replace the nymph that men worshipped by an equally abstract faun. And why not? Catherine should have a phantom lover composed of all the saints, all the poets, all the world-conquerors. He could hold her affections for a time, thought the abbé, who never let himself be blinded by his hopes. He wrote to Adam's mother:

Your daughter the countess has a charming disposition and takes things as they come. She has grown passionately fond of literature, enjoys painting, and is showing a great interest in the history of our island. The arts are good and providential in that they allow the soul to imitate the movements of love, and to feel love without its being returned—which, perhaps, is the only way of feeling it permanently.

Christmas was drawing near. At last Catherine had to consent to her departure. She bade farewell to Paris—a real farewell, this time, for she knew

exactly what she was doing ; she was familiar with Vienna and Lemberg, and the state of marriage ; she did not believe that happiness was something which lay at the end of a journey. It never occurred to her that she might disobey her mother-in-law's instructions. To win back her lost Paris, she knew that she would have to suffer. Her grandmother had escaped for good, but only after her eighth child was born. Catherine herself must fulfil the terms of the contract she had signed in full ignorance, but also in full sincerity. To bear a son ! This was the price they asked for her deliverance.

Her tender farewells to her patron city lasted a week, and included visits to all the places she had haunted ; at present they were haunting her instead. She had loved them formerly with indifference, in that state of delicious insensibility we feel among things we never think of leaving ; but now she pored over them with the absorption of regret. She looked tenderly at the pumpkins in the creamery and at the little green bush which marked the wine-shop, knowing that the little shops of Paris, those childhood friends of hers, existed nowhere else. Every walk with the abbé became a sort of pilgrimage, which was lacking in neither piety nor love. She exulted in this direct contact with the city. Through streets intelligible to the eyes and pleasant to the memory, along sidewalks ringing clear under the heels, she hastened toward shrines which are adored not only by those who have seen them, but by strangers also. Staring at a jeweller's window in Vienna, she had seen two watch-charms, one representing the Eiffel Tower and the other Napoleon's column in the Place Vendôme. "Let's visit the stylite !" she said to Abbé Mésange as she pointed to the Emperor's statue, which stands

dizzily at the top of its spiral column like something projected into space by a spring. Lightly she crossed the Place de la Concorde, avoiding all the carriages that came rolling toward her, as if she were a little Parisian ten-pin that knew the game. To ascend the Champs-Élysées was a delight. She was attracted toward the Étoile by that horseshoe magnet, the Arc de Triomphe, beneath which the very ground heaves up, as if it were marking the attraction of the sky for Paris.

She wondered what she had come to do, as a visitor, in this world which had been her own. Was she there to buy clothes?—To obtain her provision of grace for the season, like so many women of Europe and America? Yes, because only Paris can supply the unknown force which is the very essence of love—novelty. She would grow old in other places, and twice a year she would return to Paris to be rejuvenated, like those miraculous trees of the Champs-Élysées which bear new leaves in autumn. In Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Berlin, she would be “the woman who’s just come from Paris”—she, the woman who should have stayed there always.

It was in the Rookery that she spent those last slow hours which so resemble the watch beside a deathbed. With a sort of concentration which ended by becoming impatience, everyone waited for a departure which no one desired. Somehow, the real moment of parting always precedes the physical act of separation. There was nothing to say. Madam Princess and her granddaughter held each other’s hands. From time to time M. Beau would recite, like a verse of the Psalms, an appropriate passage from the “*Mémoires d’Outre-tombe*”: “France is the heart of Europe; as one proceeds from its borders,

social life dies slowly away ; one can judge the distance from Paris by the degree of animation or languor of the country into which one retires."

To spend the winter in Galicia when one had the honour of possessing a mansion between the banks of the Seine seemed nothing less than a scandal to the Rookery. Uncle Charles-Adolphe, knowing that his niece was leaving with the intention of paying her respects to emperors, which is the idlest of all excuses, felt anger rising in his republican heart. He repeated : "You must tell them, 'Long live Poland, Monsieur !'" This advice made Catherine smile. Then silence fell again, heavy with the distance which the word "Poland" had introduced into the conversation ; and like Chateaubriand, she felt the emotions of a patriotic exile surging within her. . . .

A moment later, Abbé Mésange arrived to take her to the train. Uncle Charles-Adolphe and M. Beau climbed into the same carriage. In another cab were the Billochons, Mme Germaine the mother and Félicie the daughter, two Frenchwomen belonging to the dynasty of ladies' maids that ruled the Hôtel Leopolski. This time, like a heroine out of Racine, Catherine was departing alone with "her women". In the station she wished she were one of the conscripts who were climbing into a parallel train ; they too were bound for the eastern frontier, but at least they knew where to stop. Hanging out of the window, she said to Abbé Mésange, Uncle Charles-Adolphe, and M. Beau, who, like the apostles in paintings of the Ascension, had raised their faces toward a departing guest :

"I will come again. . . ."

CHAPTER V

Vienna, or The Sofa

AT the Auersburg Palace in the Gärtnerstrasse, before Catherine was presented at court, she heard two curious remarks about Francis Joseph. He was polite, they said; and the war would not come during his lifetime. What war? And why, Catherine wondered, shouldn't he be polite? The first of these remarks was a commonplace of the drawing-room. The second, which was made backstairs and repeated to her by the Billochons, was the precarious hope of the footmen who swarmed, in polychromatic tribes, through the cellars and attics of Vienna. However, after she had seen the Emperor, a remark of her own nearly led to a quarrel with her sister-in-law, which would have been fatal to her career. Viennese Society was divided between two rival clans--that of "Olympus" and that of the "Cousinage"--and Clementine Auersburg, by virtue of her family connections and her ill-temper, reigned as an arbiter over both. The present incident began when Catherine was granted an audience with the Archduchess Valerie, a colourless woman whose one ability was that of being vastly embarrassing without ceasing to be vastly embarrassed. During a lull in the conversation, His Apostolic Majesty entered without being announced--an unexpected favour which had been arranged some weeks in advance. By this gracious informality, the head of the Habsburg-

Lorraines revealed his interest in the new Countess Leopolska. It is true that he was polite ; but he also, by dint of reigning, had become common. So many little shopkeepers of Vienna, especially the shoemakers, who are the most numerous ; so many cabmen and pork-butchers had copied his appearance, that finally, in the evening of his life, he had become merely another example of a type which he had created—that of little old men with mutton-chop whiskers made of cotton batting. In the same way, Napoleon III fixed the type of Paris policemen, after Louis Philippe had served as a lasting model for notaries. It is all very flattering to carry a pocketful of one's own portraits, stamped on silver money. Francis Joseph, however, after surviving the exceptional misfortunes of his family, had lived so long that his portrait came to resemble that of everybody else. Plied with questions after this first meeting, Catherine giddily replied : “The Emperor ? Charming, charming . . . just a bit provincial !”

She had spoken without malice. Francis Joseph, with his good manners, had suggested one of Uncle Charles-Adolphe's friends, a minor official in the provinces—M. Amable de la Grand'Cour, the tax-collector for Lons-le-Saulnier. Her verdict on the Emperor made the rounds of Society ; it irritated some and amused others. At the Jockey Club, it was seized upon joyously by the Polish party ; but in the Auersburg Palace it was thought no laughing matter. They began to fear that Catherine, reared in Paris, had been reared by Jacobins.

When she was presented to the heir-apparent, who was called “der F. F.” by the ladies, she understood why people were so apt to insist on the politeness of the Emperor : it was by contrast. Francis Ferdinand

had an excellent policy and abominable manners ; he wished to federate the Empire, to free subject peoples from Hungarian tyranny, and to win the favour of the Czechs, the Ruthenians, the Rumanians, the Slovaks ; but he won no favour from the ladies. He had married Sophie Chotek in order to escape from the archduchesses, and he remained faithful to her out of gratitude. She had snared him with a muffler ; and Clementine Auersburg, who had witnessed the incident, described it to Catherine for her encouragement. It seems that before he blossomed into a robust and uxorious husband, Francis Ferdinand had been a young hypochondriac who was slowly losing his lungs. After the suicide of Archduke Rudolph, he had become the heir to the throne ; but he found that the attentions of town and court depended on the rise or fall of his temperature. Below 99 degrees, the Este Palace was crowded ; above 101 degrees, there was nobody to be seen. Before he reached his thirtieth year, he recovered mysteriously, but without announcing his recovery ; his illness had passed from his body into his soul. He had ceased to spit blood, but he spat with contempt for humankind. One evening, during a visit to the country seat of his aunt the Archduchess Isabelle, where Sophie Chotek was a maid of honour, the archduchess tried to drag him into the garden. The summer night was chill. Rain had fallen, an hour before, on the great trees. Francis Ferdinand was shivering ostensibly. The ladies were malicious enough to be amused by his resistance, his ill-humour, and his fears. Had they another candidate for the throne of the Habsburgs ? He could hear their stifled laughter in the shadows. Biting his lips and clenching his fists, he left the terrace, descending into the damp garden. A white form darted from

a clump of shrubbery. Someone went running past him, entered the house, returned ; and, in the moist darkness, two hands stole round his neck, surrounding it with a muffler of perfumed wool. It was Sophie Choteck. Now, clinging fast to his morganatic marriage, the father of three children, fat, happy, but full of bitterness, Francis Ferdinand was tormenting the court which he hated, by forcing it to witness the rise of the former lady-in-waiting, who had become the Princess von Hohenberg.

In this story, Clementine Auersburg found lessons which might be useful to her young sister-in-law. If ever Adam was taken ill, it would be an excellent scheme to win him back with flannels. For the moment there was nothing to be done. Mother Egypt, remembering that the Monarchy was dual, found it advisable that winter to present her younger daughters to the Emperor of Austria, four years after having presented them to the King of Hungary. It was safe to wager that she would go to Berlin, where the Austrian ambassador was a relative of hers, in order to give her *débutantes* a third *début*.

Catherine, remembering the counsels of Abbé Mésange, lived with her faun and tried to interest herself in the Austrian court, that theatre where amateurs were rehearsing an historical drama. But she discovered that they were taking incredible liberties with the text. Titus married Berenice at the end of the first act, and Mlle Mancini became the bride of Louis XIV. The Duchess of Montpensier, *la grande Mademoiselle*, had found nothing impossible in her union with Lauzun—in other words, the Archduchess Stephanie had been allowed to surrender her rank and marry her Lonyay. The coachman who drove Archduke Rudolph and Maria Vetchera to

Mayerling before the suicide had whistled "*L'amour est enfant de Bohème*". With his Bohemian wife, Francis Ferdinand could echo the sentiment. All these Habsburg romances had a middle-class ending, even the tragedies ; none of the family had studied Tacitus as expounded by Racine, and none of them had learnt that stern lesson so necessary to the heart : "In spite of him, in spite of her, they parted !" These lovers seemed never to think of "their glory". Austrian civilization had passed through no such age of disciplined splendour as the seventeenth century in France, and all its history showed the lack of this training. Vienna seemed to oscillate between flaccid love affairs and a gross sort of conjugal virtue abounding in benedictions. The whole city carried the imprint of its own great era, which had been that of Maria Theresa, a devoted mother, and of the Prince de Ligne, a good-natured libertine. Traces of an easy-going century were everywhere to be seen. Vienna, under its shield of stiff formality, was affable, tiresome, and lax.

Catherine took no pride in her conquest of this Society. By her marriage, she had been placed almost at the summit of that pyramid which rises from a base of disdain to an apex of respect. The higher one was placed, the more there was to disdain, the less there was to respect ; and it happened that Catherine respected nothing at all. Her impertinence exceeded that of Pauline von Metternich herself, and it was not even intentional. She said of a young archduke, whose Habsburg prognathism was being vaunted in her presence as a sign of race : "I should buy him, if he were a dog," and thought she had said nothing unusual. She learned to "hold sofa", and to kiss the hands of her female relatives. She would have been

willing to surrender all the sofas in the world, in return for the privilege of not kissing those musty gloves. An entertainment given in her honour at the Schwarzenberg Palace roused the passionate interest of all Society. The guests arrived in powdered wigs, paniers, brocades, knee breeches. There was a rockery covered with artificial snow; there were Chinese lanterns; there was a general profusion of that "rococo" which is a weakness of the Viennese. Once again, as at Zamosc, she felt herself threatened by dates. The sands in the hour-glass were running backwards. All the nineteenth century was to be lived over. Toward the end of the supper she saw the first pale dawn of the Terror, and merely the hint of dawn was enough to disperse such ghosts as these.

That year, as if to parody Wellington as seen by Chateaubriand, the foreign minister was parading his Sanjak through the salons as a trap for women. During a dinner in the Ballplatz, Aerenthal offered her the Sanjak of Novi-Bazar on a silver platter; she was to give it to Russia. The word "Bazar" made her laugh. She said: "And all the bazaar," remembering an expression of Angela's. But she let herself be seduced neither by Bosnia nor by Herzegovina. Her social success was due to her indifference. The fashionable world of Vienna, usually so inhospitable to strangers, was charmed with her because she touched the imagination, because she threatened to escape, and because, having come from a distance, she was leaving for other distances. Archdukes and princes, trembling at the thought of losing her, invented ways to keep her—not only because she was a lawful prize, young, which is not true of all countesses, rich, which is not often the case with beauties; but also instinctively—because she was the woman that came from Paris and

was leaving for St. Petersburg—the splendid meteor that was filling all their sky.

Adam was irritated by his wife's success, but not in the fashion his mother had hoped. Vienna, which had paid much attention to the arch-count, was neglecting him at present, and his Hungarian as well. Her type was too familiar. Vienna was interested only in the stranger. By marrying Catherine, Adam had launched her in Society. Now that he had forsaken her, it was irritating to see that she was sailing forward without his aid, and was even acquiring an impetus of her own. He himself was couring other game and expected to be followed. Nothing of the sort occurred. The other Vienna huntsmen held after *la belle Paris*, and the master of hounds began to question his prerogatives. This doubt was galling. He had been right to distrust marriage, that act of division which robs us of half our possessions. Catherine had taken that which his sisters had never been strong enough to take, in spite of their being five : first of all his name, which had the same magical effect whether it was borne by him or by her ; then his place in Society, corresponding to the acreage of forest and farmland, of mountains and valleys, attached to this name ; then finally Zamosc, which, with its three hundred guest-rooms, was not only the most luxurious hotel in Europe, but the cheapest. There she faced him at table and was the co-participant of his absolute power. And his jewels also ; these she had taken in their entirety. Was it just ? Was there any reason to wonder that she outshone him at a ball ? He came to regret that Poland had other customs than Hungary, where, at public functions, the women are like grey hens beside those resplendent peacocks their husbands. On gala days in Budapest,

one family displays its sapphires as big as plovers' eggs, and another its emeralds as big as ducks' eggs, and all these jewels are borne by the men, who also wear the sables, the brocades, and the aigrettes. He was irritated by Viennese Society and exasperated by Catherine, but not to the point of wishing to humiliate her in the fashion his mother had expected. Roji was guarding him vigilantly. One by one she retailed all the insults which were heaped on her head by the Auersburg clan. If the real insults did not suffice, she invented others. She was determined to convince him that they were trying to drive her away. Like a cat, he would show his claws if he thought that his quarry was escaping. He would keep his Hungarian so long as the family tried to separate them. His reaction was to cut short their visit to Vienna. He carried off Catherine at the height of her success. She left the day after a ball, and the day before a greater ball which was being given in her honour at the Palavicini Palace. Young Count Schönberger had ordered flowers from Italy for the cotillion he was to have led with her. As Catherine walked toward her railway carriage, she found these roses scattered over the platform, hiding the grey snow.

CHAPTER VI

Berlin, or The Sentry-box

IN Berlin, Catherine found Napoleon under the Brandenburger Tor. It was the only meeting which seemed pleasant to a girl whose grandmother and whose teachers had lived through the siege of Paris. Since making the acquaintance of Germans and acquiring German relatives, she had been surprised to hear herself saying: "But they aren't Prussians at all, they're Catholics," as if she were seeking excuses for herself. In Berlin, however, there was no escaping it; the people she saw were really Prussians. Just as in Vienna and even more, she was amazed at finding the streets crowded with soldiers. Their uniforms stood out against the snow. Was every city but Paris a garrison town? In Vienna she had dated her letters from "The Sofa"; now they were dated from "The Sentry-box".

She lived across the street from the Prussian Ministry of War, in the mansion of Adam's uncle Fürst von Plön, inspector-general of cavalry. Her windows faced an empty court, ornamented with sentries instead of cypresses. The most surprising feature of her new dwelling was its display of Napoleonic fetishism: all the pictures on the walls were copies of Gros, David, Raffet, and Detaille, representing the conqueror in his successive manifestations—Bonaparte

thin and Bonaparte plump ; Bonaparte as lieutenant, consul, emperor ; and finally the ghost of Bonaparte. "I should think myself in the house of Prince Victor-Napoleon, if only the cooking were less abominable," she wrote to Abbé Mésange. "I might well say, like poor Laforgue when he was reader to the Empress Augusta : 'But I am hungry only in France'."

At every ball she attended, Catherine was terrified at finding herself surrounded by the pomp of war. She was hedged about by men with metal buttons, who wore all sorts of insignia on their collars—numerals, bombs, lightnings, death's-heads—and who, in spite of their portentous uniforms, could do nothing in her presence but clack their heels. It was their way of speaking to women. They were telegraph operators ticking out the Morse code with their feet. As they approached her, they would bring their eloquent heels together, once, twice, a dozen times, as if to say with delicate shades of meaning : "I am at your service—you are the fairest of the fair—will you dance with me—may I have the honour of giving you my arm and escorting you to supper?" And, in the conventional alphabet of the Guard : "You are my superior !" In the letters to Abbé Mésange, she spoke of "spirit rappings". However, these merely eloquent heels became dangerous when they danced, for they carried spurs. Designed as they were to harry the flank of a horse, they were fatal to delicate silks. Catherine, feeling her gown give way, shuddered as if she had nerves at the very tip of her train. She decided that Berlin, with its spurs and swords, its crack regiments, its aides-de-camp, its officers of the Guard, was to the French Empire what Zamosc was to the Versailles of Louis XIV : an imitation.

Her presentation at court took place on January 28th. It seemed to Catherine that she was visiting the commanding officer of a fortress on a day when women, by special permission, were allowed to invade the barracks. The Emperor clacked his heels like everybody else; he even paid two or three of these pedestrian compliments to his guest. So this was Wilhelm II, the man to whom Angela the cook and Maria Robinet were accustomed to delegate their troubles, saying: "I'll give it to Wilhelm," when they suffered from headaches or colds! He asked a few embarrassing questions about what was said of him in Paris, and was kind enough to answer them himself, with much aptness. It was wrong, so he said, to believe that he was seeking the destruction of France; he sought only her regeneration. The French might forget that he was descended from Admiral de Coligny, but he would never forget. Again he clacked his heels. Catherine had just heard the monologue in dialogue form with which the Emperor favoured his guests when they came from Paris and might possibly return. For their benefit, he paraded his descent from the Admiral, in accordance with that old principle of universality which puts a glove in the hands of kings along with the sceptre, sets them above all nationalities, and, on certain days, leads them to wear the uniform of regiments which are destined to fight against them. Catherine remembered a sentence from the "*Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*": "Herr Ancillon, like many other illustrious Prussians, was of French descent. . . ."

She spent only a week in Berlin, which was time enough to recruit a regiment of admirers. All of them invited her to return in May for the grand parade. They could imagine nothing which was

better calculated to touch a woman's heart than to present her, one with his battalion, another with his squadron, a third with his brigade, while all of them offered themselves in battle harness for her admiration. Without regrets she left what she called the "Court Martial".

CHAPTER VII

The Third Emperor of the Season

THE old Countess, who supervised Adam's heart from a distance, was careful to spread the news of Catherine's conquests. Thus, her fame as a seductress preceded her to St. Petersburg, and it was such a fame as can easily ruin a woman's life. It aroused the vanity of her admirers. Henceforth every emotion they felt toward her would be subordinated to their esteem for themselves. They would use her merely as a pretext for the compliments they addressed one to another. They would pay court, not to what she was, but to what the great foreign connoisseurs of beauty pronounced her to be. And they would come to resemble those connoisseurs of painting who are interested less in the picture itself than in the number, wealth, and capacity for envy of their rivals. Catherine's market value, like that of a Botticelli, rose to fabulous heights. She decided that she would never more be loved for herself; she had become merely a vogue. Adam alone had chosen her before the vogue began. He had loved little Catherine, the pupil of old M. Beau, and for this she felt a dim sort of gratitude. If he had ceased to love her, it was possibly because of the black deed they had been forced to commit together. And doubtless, if he preferred another, it was because these insane gestures were unnecessary, with Roji. . . . Catherine extended her own purity to her rival. It never even occurred to her that she might some day

yield to the passions she aroused. A woman must be either stupid or out of her mind, she thought, to give others a privilege which had caused a madly devoted husband, whose right it was, to sicken of his love. No matter what might be the hopes of the old Countess, there was very little chance of Catherine's bearing a child of adultery, and thus confirming the elder branch of the Leopolskis in their possession of Zamosc.

At the Eliagin Palace on the Fontanka Canal, Catherine found the same warm intimacy which had pervaded the Salon of Flora. The old prince had left his embassy to receive her. She made the rounds of Petersburg Society, as she had already done in Vienna and Berlin. She was impressed more by the resemblances than by the differences between the three empires, there being only one point of comparison in her mind: Paris, her fair republic. It seemed that civil life existed nowhere else; there were only uniforms, guardsmen, snow, and stoves! The stoves made her head swim. Could one imagine reading by a stove-corner, gathering in front of a merry stove to talk, or dreaming with one's eyes lost in a stove? She longed for the fireplace which opens a room to the sky. She preferred the shadow of dancing flames and the crackle of twigs on the hearth to the snoring of motionless object which made one dizzy with heat. She missed the invigorating air of houses without storm windows. The winter which shrouded all Europe was such as she had known only by hearsay. It seemed that everywhere north and east of the French border, the Terrible Year came every year. People told her: "The Czar is a prisoner," but so also were his courtiers and all the inhabitants of his capital.

In the Eliagin Palace they spoke of war and revolu_

tion, usually in sequence, but often simultaneously, as if the time had passed for choosing between them. The old ambassador had returned from Constantinople with his resignation. The dream of Peter the Great was turning into a nightmare. Aerenthal, the tennis player, had won his match with Isvolski. The plums and pigs of Serbia had lost their road to the sea, and all the Petersburg ladies were inconsolable. Prince Ferdinand had been promoted to the czardom of Bulgaria, with a spontaneity which he had helped to manufacture. There were no limits to the impertinence of the Press. English newspapers spoke of him as "the lesser Czar". In salons where State secrets were discussed, as indeed they were in every salon, people talked of nothing except pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism, out of which a "pan-pan" war would inevitably result, according to the Grand Duchess Eudoxia. In every country she visited, Catherine had been told of a truth unknown to the Rookery: namely, that the peace of France was menaced by Germany, by Austria, and by Russia. That year the monk Ilidor had succeeded M. Philippe in the confidences of Their Majesties. Every minister was uncertain, not only of the morrow, but of the moments as they passed. The motto carved on sun-dials: "I tell—the time—I do not know—the time," was one which any member of the Imperial Council might have chosen for his own.

There was table-tipping in the Winter Palace; there were spirit-rappings in the General Staff Headquarters. The last absolute monarch in Europe sought to learn the future because he was unable to control it. Before the Russo-Japanese War, he had desired The Hague and had received Tsushima instead; this made him superstitious. He had striven

obstinately, since then, for messages from the other world. But the dead speak only of the past, and all their conversation is with the other dead. The future was closed to Nicholas II.

Catherine found that Russian novels attenuated Russia. It was more like Gogol than Gogol himself. At her sister-in-law's receptions, there were as many Anna Kareninas as there were tea-cups. After meeting real Russians, she realized that her friend Prince Lvovkovitch was Russian only on the surface. He belonged to a generation trained in the universal Paris of Napoleon III. Among his contemporaries were types of splendid hybrids—Lichtenstein, Reuss, Eboli, Alexander von Hohenlohe, Ribblesdale—all of them representing human varieties which, already too rare, were condemned to gradual extinction by the rise of nationalism. Paris had formed the contemporaries of Alexander II and Alexander III; whereas her own contemporaries were degenerating into Russianism, spoke Russian among themselves, and preferred Moscow to St. Petersburg. Just as she was frightened by the barbarity of the Kremlin, she was touched by the Square of the Winter Palace and the embankments of the Neva, because they displayed an illimitable wish to resemble Paris.

Adam still refrained from the outburst of jealousy to which the old Countess had looked forward. During their visit to Vienna, he had felt a sort of rivalry with his wife, but now, in St. Petersburg, he was falling into the lethargy of gratified self-esteem. He was perversely amused by the almost universal homage rendered to this creature he had ceased to love. The possession of something which many other men desire becomes really flattering only when we have ceased to desire it ourselves. Perhaps, like all ambitious

men in high station, Adam had learned that power brings only one satisfaction, which is that of despising one's power. It seemed that nothing less than a miracle of vanity could prevent him from being jealous when he saw so many Imperial Guardsmen paying court to his wife, as so many Uhlans had done before. But perhaps he felt, with a sure instinct, that he was not in serious danger from these soldiers. However young, brilliant, and insistent they might be, they were not her species. She remained as heartfree among the pack of them as if she were strolling among so many fine horses, birds, or dogs. He began to persuade himself that the admiration aroused by Catherine was his by right ; it was a just vindication of his choice. Between his wife, who made admirers, and his mistress who made scenes, Adam was almost happy.

The old Countess, on learning from her Petersburg correspondents that her daughter-in-law was breaking a hundred hearts while Adam and Roji were quarrelling, felt vastly encouraged. She had been right to insist that Mother Egypt and her seven plagues be entertained at the Eliagin Palace, although the invitation had been thoroughly distasteful to the honest soul of Anna Lvovkovitch. As for Catherine, she did not seek to console herself ; she regarded this court, like every other, as a sort of hell, and therefore a place where it was impossible to find consolation. The idea of revenging herself on Adam for his infidelity by taking a lover struck her as monstrous ; the remedy would be worse than the disease. It was useless to take her driving in their sleighs like narrow gondolas, on some black morning after a ball, when the great cold offered each cavalier an opportunity according to his nature--to some, the privilege of

shielding her with their arms ; to others, an excuse for cowering against her. It was useless to conduct her to the Isles, through that misleading little park which so resembles the Bois de Boulogne, till the moment when the drive, instead of ending with the comic-opera prettiness of the Grand Cascade, stops short before that vast desolation which is the Gulf of Finland. They tried appealing to her unconscious by means of music, but as she listened to the gipsy melodies, she withdrew further into herself ; she grew more remote. They tried the philtres and potions common to lovers ; they made her eat and drink whatever is eaten and drunk to have a Russian soul. But her travels had only served to waken her to a narrow patriotism, that of the palate. She discovered that she possessed all the French prejudices : against caviare, for example, that black mess of doubtful consistency which is served in blacking boxes ; and against the sour soups which, after being cooled with cream, become as lukewarm as the Laodiceans—"I will spew thee out of my mouth !" the Scriptures say. Vodka, that colourless liquor, seemed to be made for cleaning silverware, and dried fish was an expedient of the Eskimos. As for capercailzie, which was vastly disappointing, it tasted like some sick little partridge which had been led to a pharmacy and dosed with pine-tar and honey. Even in Austria, the cooking had taken away her appetite ; everywhere she expected salt, she found sugar instead—to say nothing of cloves, that culinary affectation of a country without colonies. They offended her senses in the same way as the Viennese perfumeries. In Berlin, where the Protestant pork-butchers worked seven days a week and where all the venison was smeared with jam, she ate nothing but bread, which, incidentally, was poisoned with

caraway seeds. Having absorbed her phosphates in France, and thus being chemically French, she found that foreign cooking was distasteful or indifferent. In its first stage, this lack of appetite was only a feeling of hesitancy at breaking the established rules which had been tested by experience. However, she came to extend the same dislike to the people who sought her company without her seeking theirs. She was distrustful of their foreign flavour; she found that their minds had the same disagreeable taste as their capercailzies and zakouskis. Sweet-sickly Vienna, tasted once more in the gallantries of the Viennese; Russia, which blew hot and cold like its soups; Berlin, with its smoked meats mirrored in the faces that perched on too-lofty collars and smelt of cigars—all these were fundamentally alien to her nature. Only Godfather Lvovkovitch understood the subtle dislikes which she could never formulate. All his life, he had been faithful only to his French cook.

Catherine was presented to the Czar by her Russian relatives, and not through the kind offices of the Austrian ambassador. This caused a pretty scandal in Vienna. Nicholas II was her third emperor of the season, and the only one she saw with any pleasure. She remembered the joyful day in her childhood when she had shouted: "Long live the Czar!" She recognized the puny frame, the bearded face, the tender eyes; they had been pictured often in France since the Russian alliance. In Angela's kitchen, he was known as "the man who is going to give Alsace and Lorraine back to France." Did he even think of it? The pan-Slavic ladies complained that he thought of nothing. This pacific and orderly despot, this chaste little sergeant who loved no one except his long wife—did he really wish to seize Constantinople?

Prince Lvovkovitch, in submitting his resignation, had permitted himself to express his doubts.

Catherine was following the itinerary prescribed by the "*Almanach de Gotha*", which she was advised to read on her travels instead of a Baedeker. Since they had now visited the emperors in order of seniority, the Leopolskis were fortunately dispensed from visiting kings. There remained only their reigning sister, and that other sister whose kingdom was not of this world. On their return, they were to visit the margravine at Schlossenbad and the prioress at Lacroma. They rode southward through German Poland, where, on the two banks of the Vistula, they saw regiments standing guard in preparation for that pan-pan war which had been discussed, in the family, at the Eliagin Palace. Moreover, the war would be fought in the family—for the emperors, between first cousins; for the Leopolskis, between brothers-in-law; one might almost say, between themselves.

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Catherine made her entrance into Schlossenbad with the margrave, while Adam followed in a second carriage with the margravine. After them, in the lesser vehicles and in a general confusion of all ranks, came the ladies-in-waiting, Mother Egypt and her daughters, Margrave Ernest's gentlemen, and the two Billochons, mother and daughter. Saxe-Schlossenbad had the charm of being a poor court. The palace of its sovereign profited thereby, as usually happens in Germany, where the architecture improves with the absence of money and degenerates with wealth, all purity of style being only a voluntary poverty. The life there was old-fashioned. Luncheon was called dinner, as in the court of Louis XIV, and dinner was called supper. After dinner, there was a

court circle. The sovereigns and their guests—the margravine on her brother's arm, and the margrave with his sister-in-law—made the rounds as if they were taking a collection. In this case, instead of receiving, they were giving. To each according to rank, and often to three or four at a time, they offered a few amiable words. Catherine, who spoke no German, was excused from this duty; she gave only smiles. All the councillors were aulic; all the councillors' wives made curtsies. During the forenoon, the margravine received no matter whom; her afternoons and evenings were reserved for the nobility. Catherine remembered Werther, who died because he loved Charlotte, but also because he had been humiliated before Fräulein B—— at Weimar, when he was presented to the C——s after the hour for commoners. When she looked from her window at the stroke of ten, and saw some poor devil crossing the courtyard of the palace in evening clothes with his white shirt-front gleaming in the sun, she would turn to ask her sister-in-law: "Do you think it might be Werther?"

Catherine of Saxony could make nothing of Catherine-Paris's questions. As for Margrave Ernest, he always feared that they masked some imperceptible irony. From day to day more desperately in love, he ordered a great parade to be held in honour of the Leopolskis. It took place on the level parade-ground in front of the château, while Catherine and the other ladies watched from the balcony. The margrave, on horseback, wearing a bearskin shako with a chin-strap of polished leather and a tight-fitting tunic with gilt frogs and a rich emblazonment of silver stars, presented his men. Catherine bit her lips and managed not to laugh. The white-breeched, blue-and-red-coated regiments performed their

manœuvres artistically, to the sound of fifes. The parade was a veritable quadrille. It was such a spectacle as could have been devised only by poverty-stricken monarchs, who, not being able to maintain both a *corps-de-ballet* and an army corps, regaled themselves and their households with a military dance which combined utility with enjoyment. For Catherine, this display of military pomp became a veritable obsession. The tramp of the Saxon sentinels beneath her windows kept her from sleeping. And this was the sound which had roused the envy of Adam's other sisters—the Papalina lulled in her Roman palace by the sound of fountains; Clementine Auersburg in the perfect silence of her aristocratic quarter of Vienna; the prioress in her cloister! In Catherine's eyes, any life whatever seemed preferable to the inanity of this monarchical existence. To relieve the boredom which afflicted these representatives of God in the provinces, cannons were fired on their birthdays; they were wakened every morning by a serenade of brasses; and their comings and goings were heralded by the roll of drums, as if they were lost objects proclaimed in the market-place by the town crier. Margrave Ernest, out of courtesy to his sister-in-law, asked her to choose a play for the gala performance at the court theatre. Having consulted the repertory, she selected Schiller's *Joan of Arc*—not that she understood German, or saw any difference between one play and another; but simply to justify her quoting a passage from the "*Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*" in her next letter to the Rookery:

"I have seen a performance of Schiller's *Joan of Arc*: what a nation these French are! And what a place they hold in the minds of other nations!"

Having toured the imperial courts of Europe,

Adam was returning with a republican wife. But he was also being escorted by a despotic mistress. Toward Roji he bore that solid relationship of criminal to policemen which is the final stage of every liaison. Day by day the bonds grew tauter; they were now stretched almost to the breaking point. Not even Roji his relative, who knew the whole story of Adam's life, could depart from the routine established by his former gaolers. Each, in hopes of keeping him, had raised the walls a little higher and shot the bolt a little tighter, till finally another woman helped him to escape—but without ever restoring him to liberty. On the last day of their visit, a violent scene took place between Adam and Roji; the favourite was tired of the part which she, like her mother and sisters, had been forced to play for the last week in all the court processions; it was that of "retinue". Now at last, she was ashamed.

To spare Catherine the screams of her Hungarian cousin, which were ringing even in the vaults of the guard-room, and to keep her from seeing the arrival of the court physician, called when Roji fell back in a final swoon, the margravine begged Ernest to take their sister-in-law to Rösleinroth. They would visit the summer palace of the sovereigns. Catherine was to leave for Ragusa that evening, and she was greatly afraid of missing her train. But she was reassured when she saw that the reigning dukes, to go from their winter palace to their summer residence, had only to cross the square. The Versailles of Saxe-Schlossenbad was hardly a gunshot from its Tuileries—a convenient arrangement in case of revolution. After leading her through a bare and wistful garden to visit his jerry-built Trianon, Margrave Ernest fell once more at the feet of his sister-in-law. All

during the official visit of his relatives, he had restrained himself ; but now that Catherine and he were alone in this "folly" of his ancestors, he gave free rein to his passion. This time he did not propose to become the father of her first child, as he had done in the marshes of Imsk. Instead he suggested a sort of platonic paternity. He was sorry for having offended her. He had come to realize her virtue and purity, which were qualities he had never been taught to expect from a Parisian. This time he was offering her a mystic marriage ; they would love each other, but without sinning against God ; she would pardon Adam, but when she was in her husband's arms, she must swear to think only of Ernest. A transfusion would take place by spiritual grace, and the child would be born in his image. He tried to explain Kant, Goethe, "The Elective Affinities", and Hertzian waves. But he became confused. To his great surprise, he saw that he had angered her once more. She rushed across the gardens, seeking the gate, the gatekeeper, any path to escape. He could not understand. Heartbroken, he came trotting after her. He had felt so admirable when he set out to show her the other side of the German soul.

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The Prioress of Ragusa was waiting for them in the Isle of Lacroma, her priory. Here, their series of wedding visits would come to an end. Adam took his wife to the gate of the convent, and leaving her there, hurried back to shoot hares in Poland, the season being nearly over. He had found it very easy to convince Roji that she should wait for him at Zamosc, for although the convent doors were open to her, they would be closed to him. As for Catherine, she had looked forward to this perfect retreat from

the world. She was touched by the thought of this sister-in-law, who, in her convent, continued the tradition of Madame Louise, princess of France, and served as a spiritual counterweight to her brother who for his part continued the tradition of Louis XV. She had now become interested in her husband's family for biological reasons. When she told herself that Adam was like his ancestors, she was better able to excuse him. Escaping from what the Church calls "dominations and thrones", she hoped to find peace of heart, at least for a time, in the company of this barefoot Carmelite. She had thought of taking a cure of humility, as one might take a milk-cure or a water-cure, but she was soon undeceived. Countess Louise, known in the convent as Felicity-of-Jesus, was a handsome woman of fifty, whose veil served the admirable purpose of hiding her double chin. Her reception of Catherine was friendly, demonstrative, and not in the least unworldly. After thirty years in a convent, she had not lost the manners of Society. Proudly, as if she were leading her to an apartment reserved for distinguished guests, and with the same show of politeness in the doorways, she took Catherine to a cell. There she descanted on the beauties of the view, which, over a wall exactly seven metres high as prescribed by the rules of her order, embraced Ragusa, the golden sea, and Fort Napoleon the colour of the sun. . . . They talked together, or rather the prioress talked. She asked after all her relatives—those of Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Lemberg, Warsaw, Cracow, St. Petersburg, Rome, and London. Had Catherine seen everybody—Lory, Mémi, Roro? Had she met Lutzi, Zita, Kruzi, and Cara? And the La Feuillades, and the de Dombes, and the Hardforts, and the Hagfelds—what were they all doing? Would they come to

Zamosc this year? But she did not mention her sisters. Catherine remembered the black tresses coiled like a serpent under glass, between wax orange-blossoms, which had set her to dreaming in a forbidden room at Zamosc. The prioress guided her through the convent, which had been built for her when she chose her vocation, shortly after her sister's engagement to Margrave Ernest. Afterwards they strolled in a magnificent Garden of the Hesperides, created merely by walling it round. Wherever they met a nun, and whatever her occupation might be, she would leave her work, bow her knee to the ground, and kiss the limp hand which her superior held out to her. Seventy-eight women, of all ages and chiefly of peasant stock, lived in utter dependence on Mother Felicity, who, in their estimation and within the limits fixed by St. Theresa, represented the person of Jesus Christ on earth. And when she appeared to these awe-struck women for the first time during the day, they were not content with kissing her hand; one by one the nuns would prostrate themselves before their prioress. Catherine was beginning to realize that of all her sisters-in-law, it was Countess Louise who had made the brilliant marriage. During the three days of her visit, she depended only on herself for edification. She spent her evenings reading the rule of St. Theresa. There, marked with a sharp thumbnail, she read the words: "We, the nuns, are a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men." She reflected on this statement, and decided that Countess Louise had entered the convent in hopes of finding a still more glorified life.

Days and nights swept by with unaccustomed speed. In the centre of the convent was a clock which must have been heard far out at sea. It struck the hours, the half-hours, the quarter-hours, and gave

a deep note of warning five minutes before it struck. Time had ceased to exist, like a rose stripped of its petals one by one, which has ceased to be a rose. . . . When Catherine left the nuns, she had come to share their feeling that eternity would surely begin in five minutes. The war against time was a mad enterprise of all the Leopolskis, but only Felicity-of-Jesus had won the battle, and of all this once-reigning family, she was the one who reigned most despotically.

CHAPTER VIII

The Accident

ZAMOSC under the tarnished snows of March, with all the mythological statues hidden in packing boxes, impressed Catherine as being a resort to which she was returning too soon, while it still was closed for the season. Yet there was no escaping the visit, for this was the month of wild boars. Guns were arriving daily. Among them were relatives from all over Europe and even a few from the banks of the Seine, who, having had no boars on their own estates since 1793, were forced to seek them elsewhere; these Frenchmen were François d'Entragues, the Duke de la Ferté-Massé, Emmanuel Desportes, and Philibert de Champigny. Though few in number, they no sooner caught sight of a theatre and their lovely cousin than they decided to stage a play. The old Countess was faithful to her idea of moving her son's heart through jealousy, and encouraged Catherine to take part in the production. It was not easy to find an amusing play; the library contained nothing but masterpieces. Driven by necessity, the actors became authors; they set about producing a topical revue which was at first to be a secret and afterwards a surprise. They began a series of clandestine meetings; on returning from the fields they would gather sometimes in one apartment and sometimes in another; then, each by a different path, they would steal on tip-toe into the theatre. For ten days, the joy of secret rehearsals was combined with the excitement of playing hide-and-seek on a vast scale. They had to

conceal themselves from all their enemies ; they had to guard the door against spies ; and the Frenchmen regarded all the other inhabitants of the château, with four exceptions, as enemies or spies. The exceptions were Catherine-Paris, their leading lady ; the old Countess, who was their manager ; and the two Billochons, their costumers and accomplices.

When the curtain, one evening, rose on a scene from a Parisian revue, Adam was dumbfounded at seeing Catherine painted, powdered, and dressed like Gaby Deslys in an extravagant costume that billowed round her hips and ended at her knees. Standing under the chin of an enormous creature wearing the uniform of a vivandière, she cried in a falsetto voice : "Long live Poland, Monsieur !" The house rocked with laughter. Censured that very evening, and next day forbidden under Roji's threats, the revue had none the less been played, and the blow struck. To Adam, the revelation was prodigious. There was another Catherine in his wife ; there were twenty other Catherines whose existence he had never even suspected ; there were countless women who had been escaping him all these months ! The night had not passed before the giant standing guard in Catherine's antechamber heard the footsteps of his master. Roji, in her own room, was desperately tramping the floor. Adam had succeeded in locking the door on her, and now, with the key in his pocket, eager as a lover who hastens toward his goal, trembling like a youth who fears what he desires, he pushed open the gilt door, climbed over the balustrade, and fell breathless on the bed of the Electoral Queen.

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"My daughter, you must take advantage of your opportunity," said her mother-in-law as they were

leaving the table the following morning. It was the day of the drive in the forest. Roji, assembling all her courage, had left at daybreak with the men. Catherine had promised to join the guns during the course of the afternoon. She reached the firing-line at three o'clock, just as the signal was about to be given. Places had already been assigned by the game-keeper. Catherine signalled that she would stay where she was, at the end of the line. A white sky was wound about the trees like a skein of yarn.

Where a rectilinear alley cut through the forest, the guns stood in rank; their shadows stretched before them, at first gigantic, then gradually decreasing in the mist. Catherine could see Charigny, then Adam, then Roji; beyond them she could recognize nobody; there were only men without faces. Silence and immobility peopled the great forest. A few hoarse jays warned the beasts of the wood that death was near. A horn sounded, far in the distance. . . . A moment of extraordinary calm preceded the crackle and drone of the approaching revolution. Catherine put her hands in the muff which hung by a silken cord from her neck. She felt a chill. She saw Roji take three steps forward as if to plunge into the forest, then stop with her gun at her side. Catherine could see her in profile, detached from the rest of the line, sitting back on her tripod, watching. A fox passed between Adam and Charigny, warily, without haste, his busy tail raised so as not to disturb the dead leaves. Nobody took aim. At the least alarm, the boars might force their way through the line of beaters. There was a crackling of twigs, the sound of something approaching. A first shot was heard from the other end of the line. Three bulky shadows, then two more, came trotting out of the underbrush, heads down, plunging

straight before them : the horde ! There were several shots . . . a whole volley. The white mist became a black mist. An invisible club had struck Catherine in the middle of her body. What must she do ? Above all she must keep her feet, she mustn't fall. She fell. . . .

Everything that followed was done without her knowledge : she was carried without her knowledge to the house of Tomach the guard ; a surgeon came from Vienna without her knowledge ; the operation was said to have been successful ; Society papers published articles in several languages about Countess Leopolska, injured in a hunting accident. A French Sister of Mercy was summoned to be her nurse. By the magic of delirium, the low bedroom in the game-keeper's lodge became her nursery in the Rue Matignon ; Sister Gervaise was transformed into Maria Robinet. A white apron was Catherine's only horizon. As death approached her, she had taken refuge in her infancy ; she was dependent on this white apron. Once more she became that arbitrary being : a child which loves only its nurse. Adam, kneeling beside her bed, vainly implored a look of recognition. She did not even know that he had come back to her. The old Countess stood by, a powerless spectator of this miracle. For all her years of scheming, for all her stratagems, she had never thought of eternal infidelity as a threat which would rekindle Adam's love. As the thermometer climbed to 102 degrees, he felt his passion rise with the mercury. A woman was forsaking him, and he must contend for her with something stronger than himself. For nine days he believed that she would be snatched away, and loved her as if he had lost her already. Dying, she had all

the charms of a coquette : the averted glances, the inaccessible smile, the challenge of indifference ; for nine days he believed that she would never come back to him, and Zamosc was edified by the unexampled spectacle of a husband who had moved into the gamekeeper's lodge to be near his wife. He was suffering for the first time in his life. He conceived a mysterious admiration for this woman who, so feeble, was endowed with the power of moving him to tears. All day he stood leaning against her door ; for several nights he watched at her bedside. Her temperature fell on the ninth day. They told him that there was hope ; she was probably going to live, though in a weakened state ; she had lost the maturity of her twenty years and the existence she might have shared with her husband. She had become a blind suckling, conscious of nothing but pain or pleasure, and of Sister Gervaise, the source from which they came. As soon as she could turn her head, she turned it in the direction of her nurse. As soon as she was strong enough to weep, she wept selfishly because she was lifted to change her sheets and because she was made to eat. A look of intelligence returned to her face, but she seemed to understand only one voice and to desire only one presence. Adam, who had never been jealous, was jealous of the old Sister of Mercy. He detested her white cap, her apron, and the sound of her rosary clicking against the bedstead ; he hoped she would die a thousand deaths, and he did not dare to send her away. Catherine had a relapse ; another followed ; double pneumonia set in ; and each time it was into the arms of Sister Gervaise that she threw herself to die.

Spring was creeping through the woods. Its prophets, the woodcocks, went by without a single gunshot to

celebrate their passage. Every morning the game-keeper's children gathered violets and anemones, which they carried to the sick-room. As Catherine played with these flowers, she became animated ; their strength was no greater than hers, and the wood anemones grew weary no sooner than her hands. The dawn of convalescence came in May with the first lilies-of-the-valley ; now the visits began. Sister Gervaise permitted only one at a time, to spare her patient the effort of dividing her attention. Invariably she admitted the first visitor to appear after three o'clock, and sent away the others. In this lonely spot, all the ladies who asked to see the countess came from the château, and all of them were relatives. Hence, Sister Gervaise felt no hesitation in admitting the young woman who appeared one afternoon with a great bunch of lilacs, and asked in a calm voice for the patient. The sister retired after looking at her watch ; the visit was not to last more than fifteen minutes. Entering the low-ceilinged room, the visitor approached the bed on tip-toe, kissed Catherine's hand as it played over the spread, and sat down in silence : she was Roji. Catherine saw her clearly, as on the afternoon of the drive. Lying in her state of perfect indifference, she had never thought of her rival. She forced herself to think of her now. Roji . . . her low forehead, her heavy black hair, the way she had of carrying her head. . . . Why had she come ? Catherine went over the past : it was at a ball in the Hôtel La Feuillade, on the eve of her marriage, that she had first seen this swarthy creature, this seventh plague of Mother Egypt. . . .

"She will steal your husband," sneared the Papalina. "You are very lucky, my child ; he has chosen one of the family," her mother-in-law had said. And in

spite of her luck, she had been set the task of winning him back ; she had been forced to go shooting, to live among courtiers, to please, shine, conquer, act out a comedy !—"Once is enough," said her mother-in-law. . . . "And how did you sleep ?"

Now Catherine had lost the battle. Roji had only to take her place. But what was her excuse for coming here ?

"I have come to make a confession," Roji murmured in a toneless voice. And she knelt beside the bed. Catherine was lying before her, defenceless. She struck her, but only with her words. "I fired two shots at you," she said. "And both times, I had taken aim. . . ."

Too late, Catherine was carried to the château and protected from callers. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the old Countess prevented Roji from surrendering herself to the Lemberg police, from confessing her crime on the steps of the cathedral, and, in a word, from committing all the follies which had entered her mind since Adam had forsaken her. It had taken several weeks to convince her that the rupture was final. When she had rashly brought the shadow of death between Catherine and Adam, she had failed to calculate the results of her act ; she did not realize that she was making her victim desirable ; she had not seen the reactions of a man for whom no woman could flee too swiftly, and who was faithful only to the fleeting. How could one prevail against a woman who threatened to escape him for ever ? The accident and the illness which followed, by making him uncertain of her life, had kept him in that trembling state where love is found in its most visible form—anxiety. Roji in desperation had tried

to rob him of his wife. Even had she succeeded, Adam would still have forsaken his mistress to hurry after the phantom of the woman he had lost. When Roji thought of creating a scandal and having herself imprisoned, was she trying to tempt him by danger, or was she merely punishing herself for her mistake? She was sent under guard to her mother, whose silence and vigilance were permanently assured in return for a pension. A despatch from the ambassador recalled Count Leopolski to his diplomatic post in Paris; and Catherine, accompanied by Sister Gervaise, arrived in the Ile Saint-Louis on the fifteenth of May, when the green aspens were filling her window-horizons with the shiver of new leaves.

From May, 1907, to May, 1908, in a single year of marriage, it seemed to Catherine that she had made a tour of life. Her union with Adam had not been sterile; its fruit, harboured in her body, had been a slug of lead. Like a wounded soldier who needs to be assured of his recovery, Catherine had been shown the bullet. She believed that the price of her deliverance had been paid. Roji had swept away the last traces of her love. She rose from her singular child-bed in Paris, amid the delights of her rediscovered island. Like very young mothers, she had grown during her confinement; she had not yet reached her twentieth birthday. In the space of twelve months, she had seen herself desired, courted, and forsaken the moment she was obtained. She had followed, under the guidance of her mother-in-law, a course which had led her into the forest of Zamosc one foggy day, in front of Roji's gun. From Adam she had learnt the mechanics of passion; she now repulsed

the sorry love which she had won back under a disguise, and kept for a time under the direst of threats. She did not love. She believed sincerely that she would never love again. She would do something else with her life ; she would change it into a mosaic as Abbé Mésange advised ; she would cherish books, friendships, the arts, all the complicated civilization which serves to simulate love. . . .

She began by changing the furniture. She transformed her part of the mansion into a world of her own, a new world composed of ancient things, a world admired for different reasons by artists and antiquarians. Illness had made her a child, and still better, a spoilt child. She announced that she would never spend her winters away from Paris, that she would visit Poland every other year, and that she was to be for ever excused from massacres of game. She became the ornament of that Society which such as it is, good and bad, is still the best in the world. Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg had let her escape ; Paris would keep her. Her mind was a recreation for men and a study for women. She became a fashion in the country which sets the fashion. She read and did not write, something which won her the admiration of literary men ; she was capable of acting disinterestedly, and this brought her into favour with Society people. She approached the diplomatic world through Adam's intermittent post at the embassy, and, being a foreigner, she had to seek no excuses for meeting the men who governed France. Her relatives of the Rue Saint-Dominique, being royalists, would never admit that they cultivated Catherine because of her friendship with the statesmen of the Republic. Having seen poorly-dressed people all her life, and having lavished her confidence on M. Beau's

ancient Prince Albert and the subversive neckties of Uncle Charles-Adolphe, she was extraordinarily free from all sartorial prejudice—the worst kind of prejudice for women who wish to be the friends of political leaders. The Hôtel Leopolski became the place where the France of Charles X, of Louis Philippe, and of the Second Empire, met with the two Chambers, the Academy, and the bar.

When Sister Gervaise was gone and death was exorcised, Adam relapsed into another love affair. Catherine had kept her prestige for some weeks after her struggle with death in the gamekeeper's lodge. Adam was still amazed that he had suffered, and the woman who had worked this miracle would always be charming to him, and a little awesome. Faithful to the dazzling image of Catherine which he had formed on the night before the accident, he was now deceiving her with the star of a music hall.

III. Robert

CHAPTER I

Like Palms to a Victor

ON January 27th, 1909, the kingdom which had been called "Thè Rookery", and which was no longer of this world, ceased to exist: Madam Princess died. To this act she devoted the same courage, the same touch of ingenuous irony, that had helped her to live. A first stroke of paralysis had weakened her body without breaking her spirit; afterwards she used her paralysed left hand as a bobbin on which, with her right hand, she wound the yarn as it was unravelled from her last stocking. She would begin another in the Elysian fields, she said, as she glanced sideways toward the Champs-Élysées. She still refused to take her troubles seriously. For a few days more she revolved about her dead hand. Then, complaining of being chilly, she died, sinking back in the armchair to which she insisted on being carried every evening at the hour of lighted lamps. M. Beau helped the two servants to carry her to bed. Would he at last embrace the fragile body to which his soul had clung so unremittingly? He did not dare. Allowing the servants to raise and carry the head, he grasped only the poor feet.

The deep snows had blocked the railways in Upper Moldavia, and Prince Jon was unable to arrive in time for the funeral. Catherine and M. Beau made the final arrangements in his absence. The body of this woman for whom Paris had been a goal so long

desired, and attained, and still desired after its attainment, was laid on the heights of Père Lachaise, in the dwelling-place which she had secured for her daughters. The narrow stone which covered the first Catherine-Paris, after being raised for the passage of poor Marie, was now raised again to make room for the mother. Here in the tomb, the children bore the weight of the body which had borne them; and the sandy loam of Paris, which gardeners describe as the soil for violets, came sifting into the crannies between the coffins.

Like a cold planet deserted by the sun, the Rookery fell apart. Catherine divided the furniture, sending some of the pieces to M. Beau's lodgings in the Rue de Ponthieu, and others to the house of Maria Robinet in Bourges. They were too humble to be granted a place in Catherine's new home; amid the gilt and marble of its salons, they would have looked either like curiosities or else like evidence submitted to prove a crime. Like an army capitulating with the honours of war, old Angela marched out with her copper pots. She was given a room under the eaves of the Hôtel Leopolski, where she hung the cage of the famous canaries to which the Paris Society of Canary Fanciers had awarded a prize. With the trills of their descendants, something of the Rookery survived between the banks of the Seine.

The Rookery itself was to be torn down, like its neighbour the Hôtel de Fersen. The mezzanine floor was closed to occupancy. When Prince Jon arrived, having dug himself from his snows, Mme Fenouil showed him the sealed door; the municipality had exercised its right of cancelling the lease. Prince Jon himself exercised the last of his rights against his wife: he went to a stone-cutter and ordered a monument

worthy of the great family to which this woman of humble heart belonged. The stone-cutter took him to an ironmonger, and there were further parleys. The ironmonger took him to a maker of stained glass. The result was a chapel in the oriental taste of the Italian workmen who specialize in funerary work. They spared neither marble nor gilt, neither arches nor pilasters; and they were specially lavish with escutcheons. The bills swelled with the cupolas; the prices soared with the heraldic eagles. When the monument was completed, Angela, who took care of the graves, came to tell Catherine that poor Marie would hardly recognize herself, nor Madam Princess either. Prince Jon did not haggle over costs. Why should he? Since his wife's departure from Miroslava, he had been able to economize; and he was ready to pay roundly for the pleasure of afflicting her with a last dwelling she would not have chosen for herself.

Catherine's destiny, little by little, was being circumscribed within her island; the following year saw the breaking of another bridge which had connected her with the world of her childhood. She lost the last refuge she might have found in case of danger. . . . Toward the end of the winter, on one of those damp and tender evenings when the rain-washed pavements of Paris are dancing with lights, Uncle Charles-Adolphe, as he was walking toward his bookseller's for a breath of air, was jostled by the rough hand of death. It no sooner touched him than he fell. A crowd gathered. Searching his pockets, they found his card to the National Library, on which were inscribed his truncated name and his address. They carried him to the Rue de Médicis, just around the corner from the Luxembourg. Already

he had ceased to breathe. When his will was read, it was discovered that he wished to be cremated. Uncle Charles-Adolphe continued to scandalize his family to the very end. A few aged men, with mild, intelligent faces, gathered round his coffin. They were the friends of his youth, whom he had kept all his life. "Our friend was a true scholar," one of them said. He went on to praise the literary merits of Uncle Charles-Adolphe, and the researches he performed unknown to the world, and his deep learning, which could be compared only with his modesty. The others wiped their glasses. Catherine, in the company of these nameless men, followed the coffin to the Père Lachaise. The day was gusty and interspersed with showers; March was beginning in February. Pale mists were rising from the valley of the Seine. Rapid clouds swept over the roofs of the city. And Uncle Charles-Adolphe became what he had wished to be: another band of mist in the sky of Paris.

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Catherine was faithful to her mourning, and did not appear in society for the next twelve months. However, none of her new friends had either suspected the existence of the Rookery or penetrated the disguise of M. Lescaut; so that their disappearance went unnoticed. It was confused with a long convalescence, which Catherine was thought to be prolonging still further in order to avoid another trip to Poland. A year later, Prince Jon died, leaving a will which provided that his remains should be placed beside those of his wife. The family vault had fallen to Russia with the annexation of Bessarabia in 1877, and it was more convenient to be buried in Paris.

It was also more economical. The costly chapel in Père Lachaise united those who on earth had been so violently divided.

Thus, for still another year, Catherine remained the young woman of the *chaise-longue*, the handsome black-garbed lady of the Ile Saint-Louis. She received calls and did not pay them. Men came crowding round this recumbent idol. She was the prey of brilliant talkers and seductors, who believed that they would have more success with a woman who was fixed to her place. She learned the disadvantages of a fashionable retirement. Having had her detractors, all women, she now had her votaries, almost all of them men; they tried to win her favours, yet her only intimate friends were of her own sex. The sort of women who are driven abroad by their need for men's company, which they cannot have at home, attached themselves to Catherine for her misfortune. It was about this time that the Mlles d'Entragues and de Dombes, for whom *débutante* dances still multiplied, began to speak of her in all the salons where they were credited; they spread the rumour that she could never return to Austria. They let it be understood by anyone who was so inclined—and in their circle, who was not so inclined?—that their pretty cousin had fallen in love with a Hungarian archduke, a near relative of the Emperor. The *liaison* had ended at the point of a gun, as always happens in that country. Their story of the hunting accident was so delicately reticent and so confused that one was left to puzzle over the question of who had fired the shot. Probably it was Catherine herself. To those who sought further details, these prudent young ladies explained that Charigny and La Ferté-Massé, who were eye-witnesses of the drama, had

been made to swear before leaving Poland that they would not tell the truth. So as not to compromise them, the young ladies also would keep the secret. However, there was one point on which they dwelt with unction, and that was the admirable conduct of Adam. For his family's sake, he had abandoned all thought of a separation from Catherine. Once having been stupid enough to marry her, he refused to comply with the Emperor's commands. If he consoled himself for his domestic sorrows with a little dancer from the Olympia, it was nothing more than justice. The young ladies had too much experience of the world to be ignorant of its uses.

Since Adam had been living with a woman who was under the orders of a stage-manager, he dined not at all, with regularity. This nobleman exempt from military service, this master who made laws for his household so as better to transgress them himself, this honorary diplomat, this man without a profession—in a word, this Pole—came to know the tyranny of the clock and the excitement of keeping engagements. Every evening at fifteen minutes to eight, he was to join Miquette and take her to the theatre. He was greeted with screams and round oaths if he allowed her to fear, even for a second, that he would not come. Exactitude became the ruling passion of Adam Leopolski. Enslaved by the slave that is a woman tamed by the public, he snatched a bite between acts, at the corner of a greasy table cluttered with jars of make-up. And when Miquette cried: "Get to hell out of here!"—not to his cup of coffee, which he never had time to drink, but to himself—he thought he was tasting the strong emotions of his ancestor Louis XV.

Catherine took to dining alone, but in Paris a

woman of her type could not long adhere to this melancholy habit. Having begun by asking Abbé Mésange and M. Beau to stay for dinner, she soon extended the invitation to other callers when she doubted that they were going home to dress. So as to give her invitations a still more informal air, she had the table spread in the corner room, where they dined four or five together in the glow of sunset reflected from the Seine. When Adam Leopolski, hastening toward Miquette, crossed his wife's salon, he often stumbled on this group of illustrious strangers. He listened distractedly to their names, which were Hébrard, Capus, Rodin, France, and observed that they were old and not in evening dress. He called them "the bonzes". This nickname was extended to the time they appeared, which became "the hour of the bonzes." Something of the Matignon tradition had survived in the Ile Saint-Louis, with all the splendour which the river added to the hour of lighted lamps. Soon, to avoid the strange guests his wife was cultivating, Adam ceased even to enter the corner room, and rushed out by another door. The Leaguers took pity on him, saying: "She entertains people her husband doesn't wish to see." And all their relatives decided that she was in the wrong.

Catherine's mania for surrounding herself with old men was beginning to discourage her younger admirers. She was cheating life. Her happy air was incompatible with the absence of a lover. An attempt was made to give her several bad reputations, none of which lasted. That of being a blue-stocking failed to survive the test of a conversation with her. She spoke simply, and her happy choice of words made her amusing. Moreover, French society has retained very little prejudice against intellectual women since

the days of Mme de Staël and of George Sand. There must be other reasons for her not taking a lover. Her reputation for frigidity did not harmonize with her appearance. Besides, since the Récamier affair, French clubmen have ceased to believe in physiological purity. They spoke of Lesbians. But her evident preference for masculine society frightened off the women who might otherwise have rushed in to console her. The others, who came to the Hôtel Leopolski in hopes of meeting men, soon left off their visits. They had realized that men did not see them. The effect of Catherine's presence was to make other women invisible.

Isvolski, who was attracted not only by the celebrated passion of old Lvovkovitch for Catherine, but even more by the admiration shown her by his enemy Aerenthal, was a frequent caller. "Women are never friends ; they are only accomplices," he told her one day. The world, which agreed with the Russian ambassador, concluded that Catherine had still to feel the need for accomplices. Since, by nature and education, she took pleasure in men's company, and since their company unfortunately involved their homage, she was accused of enticing them. One might just as well accuse a plant of enticing the rays of the sun. She was playing the jilt in spite of herself, and none of those who aspired to win her love—none, that is, of all the men who approached her—suspected the real author of their disappointments.

Adam was successful in defending his marital honour, not because he valued it more highly than other husbands, but simply because his example had made a sceptic of his wife. He had robbed her of that power of believing in love and the resurrection of love which is the religion of women. She had seen

his life, and the life of other men in his, since he had been her revelation of the world. He had been sent to warn her, like the drunken helots whom the Spartans paraded before their children. Leaving him to his bacchantes, she turned away from the spectacle. Of all that life brought her, she made two parts: one part for friendship, which she believed to be the only plausible form of love, and another part which she neglected. Everything is known sooner or later in Paris, and people soon learnt how Catherine discouraged her admirers. One day, during a stroll in the Bois de Boulogne, she had told La Ferté-Massé, who was urging her to yield to his desires:

“When I walk with a man, I know that I am walking with a man and a dog. I am never concerned with the wishes of the dog.”

The women were against her already. After answers of this nature to questions of this nature, the men were against her also. There remained only the children—which is to say, the childlike men who were capable of disinterested love: among them were a philologist, an Englishman, a palæontologist, a physician. There remained also a few vain men who were satisfied with the mere appearance of a liaison, though its platonic nature was doubted only by their mistresses, who, being jealous, were more easily controlled. There remained still other pretended admirers by whom Catherine was used as a means of conquest. It happened that some women yielded to the thought that the men who were courting them had been to the Hôtel Leopolski, and that there was only one method of preventing their return. There remained also the authors, who sought the caress of her mind; the orators, who were roused by her sallies; and the men of fashion, whose elegance

was wedded to hers. Thus, she was never alone, although she and her guests were never "together" in the sense which the servants' hall, that moulder of reputations, attaches to these words.

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She knew that she had been lonely as soon as her loneliness came to an end. The birth of love is always accompanied by the idea of solitude. A single being appears, and the rest of the world grows empty. Whence did this being come? Properly speaking, from the skies. One morning in the month of June, 1912, at sunrise, a little group of enthusiasts had gathered on the river-bank, in a neighbourhood known as the Point-du-Jour, to watch the trial flight of a hydroplane. They included the minister of war, the Russian ambassador, a few designers, half a dozen engineers, an equal number of journalists, and a woman. Her interest in aviation had charmed the spectators, as had also her youth. Like hosts, they did her the honours of air and water; it was as if this perilous show were being given for her. And when the luminous swan, after being absorbed into the growing light, turned, grew in size, blackened to a point in the distance, and finally came back with a noise of thunder to rend the bosom of the river, it was as if the mythological machine and its human pilot were being dedicated to Catherine. Robert Ricard climbed to the bank. She was carried toward him, like palms to a victor, with the felicitations of the crowd.

He received her with surprise, with gratitude. During the breakfast given for the pilot-inventor by the Russian government, in a little café overlooking the water, he rested his eyes on her and

thought : "It is good to be here ; I am in the sun." There was a woman among them, and for him this inexplicable presence was enough. He saw her ; perhaps in another moment he would see her no more. His instinct commanded him to hold her while she was there, but his reason held him back. Robert Ricard was one of those logical young Frenchmen who think they have succeeded, once and for all, in regulating their hearts by their watches. Under the arbour where they crowded at one table, in the thorough informality of an early breakfast, his eyes went seeking the man to whom Catherine might belong ; and, as he hoped not to find him, his hopes were justified. He decided that she had come by chance, and was delighted with an explanation which cleared his path of obstacles. However, since he foresaw that she would disappear in the same mysterious fashion, perhaps without giving him time to pass the bounds of mere politeness, he contented himself with a sort of vicarious courtship. Having removed her gloves, Catherine had laid them on the table, not beside the ambassador, but on the side toward the aviator. Robert was elated by this choice. He lavished all his caresses on the abandoned gloves, not daring to offer such affection to Catherine herself. He raised them tenderly ; he showed them all his kindness, his thoughtfulness, his fervour. He treated them as if they shared the delicacy of his own emotions. And Catherine, who had thought herself beyond the reach of any man, was touched by this indirect caress.

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Ricard, Robert Ricard . . . she soon perceived that this name was exerting a dangerous power over her mind. She read it everywhere ; it stood out from

the page ; it seemed always to be written in italics ; and when she closed her eyes to escape it, the letters became phosphorescent. Until that year, the name could be found only in scientific news ; now it was appearing on the sporting page and in articles about the army ; it was mentioned in editorials ; it invaded the cover of illustrated magazines ; it had already entered the encyclopædia. She heard it spoken by an inner voice, and was astonished to find how all her being echoed with the soundless name. Having carried these syllables within her mind, she finally began to utter them. She caught herself saying, "Ricard." She added, for those who overheard this sudden exclamation : "I mean Robert Ricard the aviator, whom I saw testing his hydroplane at the Point-du-Jour. . . ." She stared at the Seine as it flowed beneath her windows. It had ceased to be the same river.

Once the magic word had escaped her lips, it acquired an extraordinary power. It spread among her associates ; it was repeated by all her acquaintances. Her friends lost their indifference and took a sudden interest in aviation. The news would travel from mouth to mouth : "Ricard is at Marseilles ; Ricard has crossed the Mediterranean. . . . The speed records have been broken by Ricard. . . ." She was accumulating facts and dates round this magnetic name.

Ricard (Robert) was born in Paris, April 2nd, 1884. His father was Pierre Ricard, the mathematician. After graduating with honours from Stanislas, he matriculated at the École Polytechnique. . . . He performed his military service as engineer of a submarine, the *Ichthyos*.

Ricard is an astronomer. With an endowment furnished by the University of Chicago, he founded

an observatory in Tahiti. Called back to Paris by the lingering illness of Henri Ricard, chief chemist of the Pasteur Institute, he was present at the death-bed. This elder brother, a rival of Curie, fell victim to the rays whose energy he was the first to discover. Robert Ricard is now living in France. He has invented a flying boat, and is fast becoming a popular hero for . . .

Catherine ceased reading the newspaper biographies, but it was only to hear the name of her hero repeated by Abbé Mésange : "Paris does not know its saints. I heard the last confession of Professor Ricard. He was a Catholic Socrates ; there was no finer character than his in all antiquity."

She learnt that the Abbé dined once a week with Robert's mother, who lived on the Rue Chaptal next door to Mme Renan. He had mentioned this before, but Catherine had never been struck by the name. It struck her now ; each time she heard it, she tingled as if her fingers had touched a battery. And this continued, till one day her inner voice, with its usual daring, called her Catherine Ricard. . . . She began to reflect on the singular custom which leads married women to assume their husband's name. For the first time, she analysed the secret reasons by which this custom is justified. And then, frightened by her obsession, feeling that she had ceased to belong to herself and wishing once more to command her own soul, she decided to obey her mother-in-law's summons and return to Zamosc.

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Slander had travelled slowly. Two seasons had elapsed before Vienna learned that Countess Leopolska, as punishment for a court crime, was forbidden to

cross the borders of the Dual Monarchy. The Austrians were not at all prepared to accept the scandal in this improbable form. They had simply decided that since she was neglecting Poland, she must have a lover in Paris. The old Countess had been furious when she heard the tale invented in the Rue Saint-Dominique, and wished Adam to bring his wife to Zamosc, if only to humiliate their enemies—which is to say, their near relatives. Catherine consented readily for reasons of her own. Adam had consented even before he was asked. Paris had ceased to exist for him, that year. He was tired even of exactitude, and the empire of Miquette was ending in a democracy. Several women were disputing his heart, among them an Englishwoman who rode to hounds, an American woman who would like to ride to hounds, and two or three *débutantes* of no special importance. The decline of Adam Leopolski was beginning ; in place of being fair game for one woman, he was becoming the plaything of several ; no woman loved him enough to defend him against the others. He had ceased to be a romantic prisoner in a donjon ; now, from time to time, he merely spent a night in gaol.

In Poland, Catherine was forced to admit that she was in love. She bitterly reproached herself. With the remnants of her old misanthropy, she raged at her weakness. What ! had all the prudence she learnt from Adam, her drunken helot, and all the wisdom with which she had armoured her mind against a hundred temptations, melted away under the eyes of this man ?—who, after all, had done nothing except to play for a moment with her gloves. In what a singular state of mind he must have found her ! It was true that she had feared for his life, reduced as he was to a mathematical point in space, and

exposed between sky and water to the danger of fire ; but must she love him merely for running risks ? She had imagined the machinery of her heart to be more delicate. At Zamosc she had once more taken her place in Adam's life, which was only her place at table. Was she going to spend her life in an indissoluble union with a chair ? Ever since she had begun to desire her complete liberty, she had felt herself a prisoner, though formerly she believed that Roji's attack had set her free. From the day when, because she had changed her heart, she had so mysteriously changed her name, she knew that she was married "to another", and in consequence married unhappily. However, her education had inured her to the rigours of analysis, and she judged herself harshly. Her hopes had wavered between two unavowable hypotheses : adultery or widowhood. In order to think of herself as Catherine Ricard, even for an instant, the alternative she must have chosen was Adam's death. This choice had been made in the very depths of her being, in that personal hell which all men fear to visit, and to which Roji had descended when seeking the courage to attempt her life.

That year, she saw the magnificence of Zamosc, with its train of laborious pleasures, in all its real poverty. Curiosity had made her first visit bearable ; now all her curiosity had disappeared. She thought in despair that when her mother-in-law was dead, she herself must take charge of the house. She might just as well be the director of a casino or the manager of an hotel. In the morning, the elder Chevalier Dombrowski, who had charge of receiving the guests, would humbly ask : "Should the landau be sent to the eleven o'clock train ; or will Their Royal Highnesses be satisfied with the char-à-banc ?" And

every evening she would listen to the guns as they spoke at dinner of what they had killed yesterday, to-day, last year at the same date, and of what they hoped to kill to-morrow. She had formerly concealed the horror she felt toward these collective murders of animals, but since she herself had been treated like a beast of the woods, her real feelings had begun to appear. Her confessed aversion set her apart ; she learnt that there was nothing to do at Zamosc if you did not go shooting ; and in the same way there was nothing to talk about, and nobody to talk with, if doublets failed to interest you, or the total bag of game, or the manner in which the stag had let himself be taken. Would she live for ever in the midst of these atavistic nobles, these neolithic men in woollen stockings, these tribal chieftains armed withWinchesters or Mannlicher-Schonauers ? It was useless for them to bring her trophies which might have adorned a cave—the tusks and horns of beasts which had ceased to be dangerous. She could dispense with their delicate attentions, which consisted in arranging dead birds on the snow to form her initials. In the family to which Catherine now wished to belong, the men were also hunters, but in other preserves, where the danger was for themselves. Professor Ricard had pursued cancer in his laboratory, and it was the hunter who had fallen. To halt birds in their flight with a bit of lead seemed a stupid exploit to Catherine ; to equal or even surpass the birds was magnificent.

In the days when she had gone shooting, and had watched from her folding stool as the men took aim, she had invariably prayed for the bird. The fall of a winged creature betrayed to gravity, the thud of a feathered body against the ground, made her sick at

heart, as if already she feared a greater fall. The first time a wounded hare had struggled at her feet, she had felt a presentiment of her own wounds. And, when she pitched forward among the dead leaves, her blood left the same stains as that of a pheasant. Why had she returned to Zamosc if she must tremble at every shot and turn away her eyes when a sportsman brought down a bird? She decided that she had come to justify her future acts; to convince herself that she would never return again. Menaced by passion, she had fled; any intelligent creature would have done the same. But once out of danger, she had turned with all her soul toward the country, the people, and the man that she had left, and man, people, and country melted together.

She began to lead the haunted life of those whose love is elsewhere. She lived for the mail and only when mail was expected; the rest of the time she did not live. Old newspapers brought her the only news which concerned her. She read prophecies of what the weather would be day before yesterday. These bulletins depicted the colour of days in Paris, all in pastel shades: "Fair but cloudy, with fresh winds from the north-west; intervals of sunshine." She even pored over the postmarks to find where her letters had been mailed. The names of such stations as La Boétie, Marceau, or Boissy d'Anglas suggested a street or a Quarter, for which she longed as for an absent friend. She became convinced that she could not breathe outside of France. She said in a letter to Abbé Mésange: "In Poland, I'm a fish out of water. It isn't so much that I lack one thing; I lack a whole collection of things; I miss the very element in which I live."

The face of Robert Ricard, which a few months

before she could not have distinguished from a thousand others, became all France for her. It was a face which could not be confused with that of an Englishman, a Russian, a Spaniard, or even a Belgian. In Catherine's eyes, it became the image of that ill-defined type, the Frenchman. Like a love-sick schoolgirl she clipped her hero's picture from the paper. The illustration showed a face with the high cheekbones of Clouet's portraits in the Louvre, with a French upper lip, with the expressive mouth that Latour loved to draw, and with a seventeenth-century nose, flaring at the nostrils. In a forage cap, he looked like Bara the drummer-boy ; in an aviator's helmet, he resembled the sculptured knights of medieval churches ; with his head bare and his black hair tangled by the four winds of heaven, he was one of those malefactors whose charming features, as pictured in the newspapers, attract the frightened glances of women. She came to know the sort of happiness, the presence in the midst of absence, which mystics obtain by spiritual concentration. She wrote by every mail. Abbé Mésange received letters which, though addressed to him, seemed to be written to the clouds that lingered over Paris, to the dripping aspens of the island, to Catherine's accomplice the Seine, and also, perhaps, to the unknown lady of the Rue Chaptal with whom he dined every Wednesday. M. Beau received other letters destined for the child whose tutor he had been, and for the schoolgirl who had still to visit the island mansion, that golden trap in which her youth was snared.

The arrival of Godfather Lvovkovitch led to a further revelation of her sentiments. Catherine had ceased to take any pleasure in being courted. No, not even by this transparent elder who had restored her

self-confidence after Adam had cast her off. Already she was guarding her purity as the most jealous of lovers might have wished to guard it. None of the laws which protect the virtue of Oriental wives is as rigorous as those which a woman, when she loves, imposes on herself out of natural delicacy. Old Lvovkovitch felt a rheumatic twinge in his heart, as if the weather were about to change. She had ceased to take any interest in what he said of her ; she was deaf to his passionate litanies. With the humble wisdom of those who have deeply loved, he realized that he should speak no more of him and her ; that she had become a stranger whose name he did not know ; and that he must divert her, carry her away, in order to drive out the intruder.

He attempted to revive her interest in statecraft, which she still described as history in the gaseous state. During that autumn of 1912, a war offered a convenient diversion. The Balkan question was being answered in a way which fired the general interest. Nicholas of Montenegro, on October 8th, having stolen a march and floated a loan in advance of his allies, declared war on Turkey, thus securing an advantage for which his brothers the other Balkan kings refused to be consoled. Ferdinand of Bulgaria, usually a guest of Zamosc at this season, wrote to excuse himself on the grounds that he was hunting Turks that year. The rumour spread that he had intended to ride horseback into the mosque of St. Sophia, but had changed his mind on learning that it was being used as a cholera hospital. His known fear of microbes had kept him from avenging the Cross. He instructed his secretary to write : "Please to inform your friends that the cholera which prevents Czar Ferdinand from entering Constantinople is known

as Russia." The letter was dated from the Chatalja lines, and bore every mark of being intended for the edification of old Lvovkovitch.

The former chancellor disliked this explosion of private wars among the Balkan princes. If he were still in office, he would have kept them at peace. He raged against these sub-Slavs, like an old gamekeeper cursing when his hounds have slipped the leash. The evil against which he had struggled during his too-long career and his too-short ambassadorship was now accomplished. In the plains of Kumanovo and Kirk Kilisseh, the hounds were coursing their own game. Catherine discovered that the "pan-pan" war, which the grand duchess had pronounced inevitable, was threatening Russia five years too soon, before her strategic railways were completed. This unfortunate delay was a topic of conversation in the seven dining-rooms, between pan-Slavists and pan-Germanists. None of the guests, who belonged to six or seven different nations, but to a single society, doubted that war was imminent; and if there was any place in the world where Germans heard Russians confess that their armies would not be ready till 1920, it was certainly the Polish Versailles.

The old Countess consoled herself for the approach of war by thinking that she had a son-in-law on the general staff of all the great powers. Zamosc, defended more strongly by marriages than by its hussars, would have nothing to fear from the invader. If there was a defeat in the family, there would also be a victory.

Catherine began to establish a sort of mental relation between the chase and the war which these atavistic nobles spoke so easily of fighting. She also realized that they were influenced by family hatreds.

Europe, in the eyes of its monarchs, was a system of cousinships, and she knew from experience what these are worth. She was beginning to appreciate a saying of Mme de Girardin: "A cousin-german is an enemy given by nature." Ever since she had been hearing court gossip, she knew that the cabinets of Berlin, St. Petersburg, and London were only branches of the nursery at Windsor, and that Nicky, Georgy, and Willy were three bad boys who continued to hate, envy, thwart, and imitate each other, according to the established rules of cousinship. Old incidents like the annexation of Hanover, and that War of the Duchies which had robbed Denmark of its Holstein, still left mortal sores, as do all questions of money among relatives. Sometimes a chance remark would reveal both the tenacious quality of these family quarrels and their geographical extent. Prince Lvovkovitch never referred to the Queen Mother of England and the Dowager-Empress of Russia except as "the two Nemeses." These Danish princesses had taught their sons to hate Prussia, the kidnapper of duchies. Thus, the vengeful ghost of the wronged King Christian, from his platform of Elsinore, was carried by them to the thrones of England and Russia. The Holstein-Gottorps of St. Petersburg and the Saxe-Coburg-Gothas of London, under the influence of the Copenhagen Glücksburgs, had started a feud with the Hohenzollerns of Berlin. What would be the result on the Hohenzollerns of Bucharest and the Saxe-Coburg-Gothas of Brussels and Sofia? Catherine was amazed to discover that all these families were German even in name; those who hated Germany were as German as the others. They were all "guns", she thought. And what can a gun do, but go off?

She confided to Godfather Lvovkovitch that she

had liked wars in her childhood, much in the same way that she enjoyed stories about ogres and ghosts ; there were the Punic Wars, the Peloponnesian War, the Hundred Years' War, the Italian wars of Charles VIII and Francis I, and even the wars of Napoleon. She had liked them in history, where they belonged, and even this liking was confined to her childhood, a period of primitive savagery which precedes the growth of the critical spirit. The idea of fighting new wars seemed as stupid and repugnant to her as that of sacrificing a living victim would have seemed to Abbé Mésange when he was saying Mass. She understood that the Shah of Persia, with his own hands, killed a black sheep every morning ; it was many centuries since rites of this nature had been performed in Europe. Her sisters-in-law filled her with horror when they spoke of the "pan-pan" war as a necessity or a diversion. Thinking of her relatives and their readiness to kill one another, she decided that what really separated her from the other inhabitants of Zamosc was the march of the centuries. She would keep her advantage of two hundred years ; she would continue to set her watch by Paris. She reached the terrifying conclusion that European nations were not of the same age. The continent was threatened with a great catastrophe because the Balkan peoples, in 1912, were just beginning their fourteenth century. Her anxiety was evident from her letters. She sent alarming news, which seemed incomprehensible to all her correspondents in France. For them, the events of the day were Peguy's *Joan of Arc* and Alain-Fournier's *Grand Meaulnes*. Marcel Proust, from whom she had just received a letter, announced that "Swann's Way" would be published in the spring of 1913. Those

to whom she confided her secret forgot about it, or believed that it did not concern them. And her discovery—the imminence of the “pan-pan” war, as desired by all the guns who dined with her, slept under the same roof, and yet were separated from her by the abyss of time—would be effaced even from her own thoughts in the course of the next few weeks, under the influence of that Nirvana which is Paris.

As soon as she decided to recover the lost centuries, to escape, to “play Henri III”—and this time without any thought of returning—she unbosomed herself to Godfather Lvovkovitch. She could no longer endure the Polish Versailles. Having come to convince herself and reconcile her reason with her heart, she had carried the experiment to its conclusion. She had listened to their stories ; she had once more considered their interests, their quarrels, their pleasures, their passions ; and she had realized that she would always remain foreign to the Leopolskis. Should she tell the old Countess that she was renouncing all thought of transmitting the heritage and of seeing that the house remained in the possession of their House ? Must she announce that she would never return ; that she was abdicating Zamosc ?

The old diplomat dissuaded her from this course. Had she not the admirable excuse of ordering new gowns ? The equinox of dressmakers would necessarily require her presence in the Rue de la Paix. In fact the equinoctial tide was long since past ; why was she still waiting . . . ? And afterwards ? Well, the house in the Ile Saint-Louis was hers. Why should she wish to break bonds which she might just as well stretch ? She had only to go away. Trains were a miracle for mending broken lives. Europe,

by travelling faster, had grown smaller ; it was now a mere county, with Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg as its principal townships and Paris as its country-seat. When Mme de Sévigné left her town house to visit her manor in Brittany, the journey had taken fifteen days—and over what roads ! Catherine, born three centuries later, was more fortunate ; she possessed a country seat only fifty-six hours from Paris. She travelled by a smooth and easy path, with a bed, a table, and running water. Besides, nobody could make her return. Galicia offered the excuse of an unpardonable climate. Wasn't it true that Catherine had a scar on her lungs ? What scruple drove her to inform her mother-in-law that she would spend no more winters in Poland ? Adam, ever since he had given her such a high place in his affection, had ceased to come near her. To make matters even easier, he was going to England that winter to hunt foxes. Next spring he was thinking of hunting otters on the shores of Hudson Bay ; his scene of action now included both shores of the Atlantic. She need only take the train. Why must she quarrel with appearances ? It was no trouble to preserve them. Paris ? Who better than himself, Godfather Lvovkovitch, could understand her need for living in Paris ? During his youth, he had known two lovely Russians who had divorced their husbands for Paris. He did not blame them ; on the contrary, they had acted on his advice. Napoleon himself had written : "A woman needs six months of Paris to know what is due her, and where her empire lies." However, when one possessed a window on the Seine and a private station in Poland ; when one could leave Zamosc in a sleeping car, it seemed a useless gesture to carry one's troubles to the courts. . . .

And Catherine could not have told this specialist in secret treaties a fact which was still unknown to herself: that out of her love for Robert Ricard would rise a question which, in its time, would become the gravest of all—the question of a passport.

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When the snow was blue with night, she left the Polish Versailles, hoping that it would be for ever. By a curious feeling of feminine complicity, it was the old Countess of whom she thought. Because she had not given a male child to this tenacious old woman who had trusted her and had pronounced over her youth the benediction of the psalm: "My flesh also shall rest in hope," Zamosc was lost to Leonilla Leopolska for those ages of ages through which her pride had wished it to live. As she fled in the gilded sleigh of the Electoral Queen, Catherine turned to look behind her. The great building seemed like a vessel caught in the ice. It had the grandiose look of an ark in the midst of a polar deluge—the ark which she had not saved. . . . As she reached the station, workmen came rushing with little brooms to sweep the snow from the steps. She saw herself in the mirror of the waiting-room where the Leopolskis never waited, and thought that for having turned toward her past, she had nearly been changed into a pillar of salt. . . .

The rails struck up a song of departure which rang in her wondering ears. She knew that for the next three nights and two days, she would be doing nothing except returning to Paris. She was tasting the joys of her journey, with that delectation of the senses which is both a return to life and a pleasure forbidden to those who have never left home or lost their health. At daybreak on the morning of her

arrival, as she passed Château-Thierry, she pressed her forehead to the window-pane, which had been growing brighter since the train had crossed the French border. Its blanket of frost had melted away. Market gardens began to appear. The melon frames, the lettuce frames, the hotbeds for growing violets, all reflected the "fair but cloudy" sky of the Paris Basin. The trees spurted up, like geysers covered with bark, or like barometers showing the atmospheric pressure of the Ile de France. Little walls formed espaliers, where the best peaches and pears in all the world are ripened. France is a modulated country ; after a Poland without modulations, it seemed a symphony to Catherine. She sang to the glory of the Convention, whose laws created small holdings, and thus, by multiplying boundary walls, enclosures, orchards, espaliers, and vineyards, succeeded in animating and humanizing the landscape. The train creaked on. After the prefatory smoke of La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, Lagny, and Chelles, against a sky the colour of fine pearls, appeared the vast grey smoke of Paris.

When she reached the Hôtel Leopolski, she ran to the window. The Seine was a path which led to the Point-du-Jour. From her house she could see the road which had carried her out of herself. She touched the railing outside the window. She dipped her fingers into the soot as into holy water. She was in Paris, and therefore she would be saved. All day she did what she pleased and nothing else besides. She recovered her rhythm. She regulated her pace by that of the city. On the *quais*, she sauntered ; in the Rue de la Paix, she ran ; in the Tuileries, she strolled ; and faithful to the consecrated expression, she ascended and descended the Champs-Élysées. In

the populous streets and along the boulevards, she felt the gaiety of a masked ball ; she mingled herself with the crowds in these lighted streets where, after four o'clock, the fine mists of winter make faces indistinguishable. Of the shadowy men that passed her, their coat collars raised, their feet hurrying, and their heads, in spite of this haste, turning to follow her—each one might be the person she was seeking.

The newspapers were announcing Robert's return, giving the date, the place, and the train : the first was November the 24th ; the second was the Gare de Lyon ; the third was the 7.55 express. He was coming from Marseilles after having flown from Tangier. She thought of hiding in the crowd to watch his arrival, but when the day came, she did nothing. She surrounded herself with solitude for him. It was easier than she had expected. One by one her admirers had begged to see her alone ; and, as they knew themselves to be many and thought themselves to be a multitude, they severally decided, on being told she could not receive them, that she was occupied with receiving another, and therefore hoped that their own turn for a private interview would follow. Sharing the general desire, she was able to satisfy it in her own case ; that is, she remained alone with herself for several weeks. Abbé Mésange was admitted at meal-times ; she received M. Beau at the hour of lighted lamps. During the first days, these old men were her only visitors. One of them led her spirit to the promised land of the Rue Chaptal ; the other carried her back to those Rookery days when she still could dispose of her life. Through them, as through a subterranean passage, her own childhood gained access to that of Robert. She learnt that when he was eight, he had jumped from a third-story

window in a parachute of his own invention—a beach umbrella, which he had broken to bits. She learnt still other unimportant details, to which she gave a mysterious meaning.

When she had reconstructed the past and had lived in her own way, familiarizing herself with Robert to the point of becoming his childhood friend, the sister he never had, and the great love of his future, Catherine, having ended the cycle of her imaginary existences, finally lost patience and decided to do whatever she could to make the acquaintance of Robert Ricard.

CHAPTER II

Robert

BLACK water from the roofs was dripping into the courtyard of the Sorbonne as the aviator came out of the auditorium after his lecture. It was the evening of February the 4th, 1913. Perhaps a dozen members of the official world accompanied him through the door reserved for the speaker. However, as he reached the porch, he was met by cheering groups of students. Caught in the crowd, he veered among the shoals of their ovations like a ship in stormy weather. He felt imprisoned by all these outstretched hands. Just as he was winning his way to freedom, the Russian naval attaché succeeded in reaching him with a message. Princess Anna Lvovkovitch and Countess Leopolska were inviting him to supper in the Ile Saint-Louis. Their foreign names conveyed nothing to him, but he was struck by their mentioning an island instead of a restaurant. He declined the invitation, saying that he was unfortunately engaged, but he felt some regret because of the Ile Saint-Louis. The naval attaché was grieved at the failure of his mission. Robert apologized once more. And, as the two of them strolled past the line of waiting vehicles, he was seized with curiosity and leaned forward to see the women who had extended the invitation. He recognized Catherine, for his memory had retained her features while letting slip her name. Her face at the window seemed to cast a glow through the

dark street. Robert felt sorry for his excuses, especially as they were not sincere. It was true that his mistress and a friend, two ghostly and shivering forms, were waiting for him in a taxi at the corner of the Rue Saint-Jacques ; but it was also true that he had never allowed this woman or any other to interfere with his liberty. Living the highest adventure of his time, he lived without adventures ; there had been only one love in his life, compared with which his mistresses were of no importance ; this love was for the brother he had lost. A tangle of cabs and carriages in the Rue de la Sorbonne permitted Catherine to see that Robert was not alone in his flight from his admirers. This discovery troubled her deeply. She felt how difficult it was to approach the inevitable. For several months, she made no further attempt to meet Robert ; she thought it unnecessary to see him. For, when she heard him speaking at the Sorbonne that evening, she had watched him so fixedly, and let herself be so impregnated with his words, that it seemed as if the impression would last for ever. She had acquired it at the cost of her own peace. But her acquisition did not last. The image faded from her mind ; the moving voice became inaudible. Love, that curious fire which dies for being fed and burns more fiercely for want of fuel, was forcing Catherine to see Robert. But how should she go about it ?

The deceptive and distant Peace of Bucharest was signed on July the 27th. Its name reminded Catherine of her forgotten childhood ; once more she saw the Rumanian sunset and assured herself that she still possessed those two words, *asculta* and *foc*, which were all that remained of her native language. She blest her forgotten birthplace for having banished her fears of war. Six months in a republic had been

enough to remove her anxieties. A letter from Anna Lvovkovitch, dated from St. Petersburg, revived them. Nobody in the Czar's court believed that the peace would be permanent. However, this alarming letter was also marvellously reassuring; it showed her a way of preserving her dignity. Courage, for women in her situation, consists in retaining a passive air when all their instincts are urging them to be in active pursuit. Princess Anna Lvovkovitch had left Paris on the day following the lecture at the Sorbonne. She carried with her the impression that her young sister-in-law had always been on cordial terms with the Ricard family. How else could she have learnt so many details about Robert's childhood? How could she have known that his mother lived in the Rue Chaptal next door to Mme Renan; that to reach the house you passed an alley of trees, a paved courtyard, an old clump of lilacs, a little fountain covered with ivy; and that you would think yourself in some provincial town? Anna wrote that one of her adopted sons, now an ensign in the navy, was being sent to France by the Russian government to study aviation. She was entrusting him to Catherine, who was to present him to her friend Robert. As soon as this request had been received, Catherine sent the Russian ambassador a note requesting him to arrange for a luncheon at which Andrei Lvovkovitch and she could meet Ricard the aviator, as her own acquaintance with him was too slight to justify inviting him to the Hôtel Leopolski.

"Will my jewel, my little Russian, my goddess of the air be here this morning?" thought Robert as he inspected the hangar where his mechanical swan was resting. Catherine had begun to frequent the air-ports

and aviation fields. Already she was familiar with the Point-du-Jour, that bewitching spot where her face had glowed with the dawn. She was also acquainted with Issy-les-Moulineaux, Villacoublay, Etampes, the factories, the school at Buc, and the harbour of Saint-Raphael. Who can measure the influence of her smile on the early progress of aviation? She gave rise to exploits. The Duke of Anjou's cry to the brothers of St. Louis is one which still applies: "*Hardi!* we can talk of our deeds some day in the hall of dames!"

In the year 1914, pilots multiplied in number and several records were broken. Andrei Lvovkovitch became Ricard's favourite pupil, and by so doing brought Catherine and Robert into daily intimacy of a sort which is hard to establish between strangers. Without Andrei, what excuse would Countess Leopolska have found for coming to the banks of the Seine, for haunting aviation fields where instruction was being given, for entering hangars with the men, for sitting at table among pilots and mechanics, and for driving back to Paris with those who had returned to her from the sky? Since she breathed the air of their danger, death seemed beautiful to all these young men. For her, it was a time of heroic bohemianism. Andrei Lvovkovitch, who had the Russian attitude toward life, invited his aunt and his comrades of the air to a restaurant and then to the theatre. Ricard, knowing no other means of seeing Catherine at the end of the day, always accepted. And, as each of the Frenchmen wished to return the hospitality of the young Russian, they ended by always dining together. Each evening an extraordinary gaiety pervaded this troop of young men who had risked their lives in the morning, and would risk

them again at dawn of the following day. Robert, who was their leader and the dean of the group, was only twenty-seven; Andrei was nineteen. His youth gave Catherine an excuse for exercising a sort of maternal supervision, which was also justified by her friendship with Anna Lvovkovitch. The good princess, who was resigned to having the most unruly of her children become a pilot, was willing that he should run the risks of aviation, but not those of sore throat. He must keep himself covered, and Catherine was to see that he never forgot his muffler when he climbed six thousand feet above the clouds. Andrei regarded her with exalted feelings of Fabrizio for the Duchess of Sanseverina: that is, with the adoration of a youth for a young aunt whose relationship lifts her above the carnal plane. All of the Wild Ducks—as the members of Robert's squadron were called—shared his fanaticism. Robert himself was conscious that this young woman was stirring their imaginations, was lending them new courage. Moreover, he was intoxicated by the thought that he and Catherine were regarded by the others as an ideal couple. Having consented to her reigning over them all, they would allow no one but Robert to reign over her.

The months of May and June had passed without Countess Leopolska's being seen at any of the social events of the season, which was unusually brilliant. She caused a scandal in the Rue Saint-Dominique by refusing to attend the Ball of the Jewels. She was thereby depriving the entertainment of an irreplaceable diadem. To those who expressed their surprise, the Leaguers exclaimed with one voice: "What! you don't know? Our cousin is living with an aviator."

Catherine and Robert had never been alone with each other. At this time, he did not even know

where she lived. With a sure instinct derived from her knowledge of the Rookery, she tried to prevent the false perspectives created by a difference in wealth from coming between herself and Robert. For this reason, she saw him only at the aviation school, where he was on his own ground. The Wild Ducks were planning to cross the Atlantic in 1915, and Robert had decided to fly the length of the Mediterranean, from Marseilles to Constantinople, the coming August. He was forced to abandon this project after an accident to his new machine. It took fire when flying at a low altitude above the Seine, into which he dived to extinguish the fire. Robert and his mechanic swam to shore. Andrei, who had plunged into the river to rescue his friend, came near being drowned, and had to be taken to shore by Robert himself.

On the day following this rescue of the rescuer by the rescued, the young Russian took pneumonia. He became delirious, and Catherine was his nurse. This was the first time Robert had seen her elsewhere than on the flying field, in a restaurant, or in a crowd. When they met at Andrei's bedside, they were almost alone ; they bent one toward the other as they bent over him ; and while Andrei was unconscious, they spoke without being overheard. Their hearts beat so loudly that they themselves could not hear. Andrei, having brought them together, left them alone with each other ; he died after struggling nine days against his illness, and brought them face to face with the one event which was still capable of separating them. Before this spectacle of youth overpowered by death, Robert's instinct to protect the one whom he loved, and to give her his life, proved stronger than reason. He had always refrained from giving his word to a

woman. But Catherine had such an air of purity, and her manners were so gentle and confiding, that when at last he dared to take her in his arms, he could think of nothing else to say than : "My fiancée !" He could have said nothing more terrifying to Catherine. She drew back, hiding her face in her hands. She stammered : "Robert, I am married !" And, without further explanation, she left the room.

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Catherine went to the German frontier to meet Andrei's mother, and, if she must break her heart, to break it by degrees. Princess Anna was arriving alone to help her adopted son. Both her husband and the old prince were kept in St. Petersburg by the preparations then being made to receive the President of France. Meeting Catherine in the station at Strasbourg, she learnt that she had come too late. Catherine refused to let her return alone with her sorrow. And, as they rode northward together, she confided her secret to Anna Lvovkovitch, who had guessed it already.

This absence, which was to last as long as the brief Paris summer, put a great prophetic silence between Robert and Catherine ; it also gained them an accomplice. "Make over your life, poor child," the princess said. "Make over your marriage first of all," she added. "You must have it annulled in the Papal Curia. You must then get a divorce in the civil courts." She went on to explain that no divorces were granted in Poland, but that in Rumania, just as in Hungary, they were easy to obtain. She was led by her natural kindness to seek compensatory joys for her young sister-in-law, whom she had pitied ever since the marriage. But her good sense impelled her to advise Catherine against taking any definite

steps till she was certain of Robert's love. Anna invited her to spend a month in her chalet, which stood by the Lake of Constance on a bank covered with forget-me-nots. Robert would be asked to join them there. "Meanwhile you must lose no time," the princess concluded. "As soon as we reach St. Petersburg, you must leave me with my poor family and return to Paris."

When the train stopped at Posen on June the 28th, they learnt that Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been murdered at Serajevo. Three days afterwards, Austria decided on a "punitive expedition". Catherine, filled with anxiety by everything she heard in the Eliagin Palace, took the train for France. On the return journey, Adam met her at the station in Berlin; he was arriving from America and had just landed at Hamburg, with a menagerie half of which was intended for Hagenbeck and the other half for himself. The wild beasts at Zamosc had to be renewed from time to time, either because they died or because the fashion in animals had changed. Adam was bringing back a fresh assortment of ferocities—pumas, raccoons, condors, some new serpents—and he himself was being brought back by the trainer's daughter, a half-breed from Florida, whom he intended to keep in the gamekeeper's lodge for the season. This armed savage made him thrill with delicious fear. He convinced himself, once again, that Catherine lacked the art of enticing him, and suggested that he meet her at the Casino de Paris in October. His new mistress and her family were to present seals "at liberty"—the same sort of liberty which Adam enjoyed. They separated, less united on earth than they were supposed to be in Heaven.

Catherine arrived in Paris once more, this time

believing that she would never have to leave. She had written to Robert from Russia, announcing her return. She invited him to the Hôtel Leopolski to get some photographs of Andrei and his last scarf pin, a gift to the aviator from Princess Anna. "You must prick his finger when you give it to him," she said, for she was superstitious.

Robert, who was too much in love to know that he was loved in return, and who thought of nothing but seeing Catherine, felt that he must change his life and adopt the course enjoined by religion—to live alone, to purify himself by any sort of fast, to abjure every sort of heresy, and to be a new man. Chivalry has sent profound roots into the French bourgeoisie, and it teaches infallible methods of exalting love. Robert did not fail to conform to them. He purified himself violently, ceased to see any women, and prepared himself for Catherine's return as for the Last Judgement.

She had written him from St. Petersburg: "Come to No. 45 Quai d'Alençon some evening after work," and she had announced the date of her arrival. He came the first evening, at the hour of lighted lamps. In his eagerness he started too soon; he made the journey on foot to calm his nerves. His footsteps could be heard from a distance, as if the island had suddenly been deserted and all Paris had fallen silent. The *quais* were empty as he climbed the draughty stairs. All the sky was trembling with the aspens. Having reached the threshold of the great salon from which the gilt was peeling, Robert paused. . . . So Catherine was the mistress of this corner house that rose like the high fore-castle of a galley in the Seine! He had often strolled round it with his brother just after their student years, when Henri was the master

and himself the disciple, and when all the heritage of man lay before them like a field to be cultivated by the heirs. She lived in the heart of his memories. In other days, when he had made the circuit of the island, urged on by Henri and urging him on, he was already revolving about her ; she was in the centre of all, because she in herself was all. He went toward the window, from which she had watched for him since the moment when Adam had approached her. It was Robert for whom she had been waiting. At this very window, facing this river, a man had spoken to a girl six years before. In silence she had asked him the eternal question of youth : "Are you the man I expect, or am I to wait for another ?" Adam had been given the benefit of her doubt. But the other had come. He was entering on his inheritance. That day, the French possessions of the Leopolskis were transferred ; the mansion passed into other hands ; and because a lone young woman possessed the corner house, the man who came there to meet her had been its real master for a year. The lamps were lighted for him ; for him the fire shone ; the books opened at the page of which he had spoken the day before ; it was his shadow which the bargemen saw moving behind the drawn blinds. To possess both present and future is not enough for passion ; it has the true strength of revolutions, which is their retro-active effect ; it is never satisfied until it destroys the past.

When Robert leaned on the window-railing beside Catherine ; when he heard the clocks of Paris strike the hour, first St. Gervais, then St. Louis-in-the-Isle, then the Palais de Justice, then the Hôtel de Ville, then near at hand, very slowly, Notre-Dame—the revolution was accomplished : Catherine had never

loved Adam. Without thinking, she let her fingers touch the window-railing that was covered with soot from the tugs. She raised her hands and was surprised to find them dirty. Robert wiped them with his handkerchief, and as she had the sort of fingers from which rings slip easily, that of Louis XV fell off, made one or two leaps, and rolled slowly over the echoing floor. He picked it up and replaced it on her finger ; immediately it became a ring which he had given. The past was not only forgotten ; it was changed.

Without a word, without giving or asking a promise, Catherine was as much divorced in that moment as she would ever be. They accepted their love, and found nothing to oppose it except its own violence, which forced them to be silent when they should have cried out. It was already too late merely to speak. This same violence forced them to stand motionless when they should have run, sought avenues of escape, gathered witnesses together, aroused the courts, the chancelleries, the embassies, the Papal Curia, fixed a day, begun the suit, and, if they hoped to deliver Catherine from the catastrophe with which she was threatened, they should have taken flight immediately. Their only hope would have been to leave the Quai d'Alençon, the island, the Hôtel Leopolski, but it was already much too late. . . . Silent, paralysed with love, they stood in the window niche till midnight. The explanations which Catherine owed Robert were put off until the morrow. She was returning from a long journey and had not yet read the newspapers. . . . He, too, was silent, having nothing to say which was not already said.

Catherine was wakened from her first sleep by

the old-clothes man, who was marching through the streets to the cry of :

“Any old ra-ags to sell?
Any old ra-a-ags?”

She had all the rags in the world ; she would give them for nothing. Her presentation robes, her shooting jackets, her suit with the bullet holes, all her old clothes—she would toss them out of the window. She jumped from the bed ; she ran to draw the curtains and let in the new day. When they had separated the night before, drunk with certitude and silence, Robert had only said : “Till to-morrow !” That morrow was to-day, the thirty-first of July. . . . All through the intolerable day, Robert did not come. He was held in conference at the Ministry of War, from which he telephoned hour by hour. His country was in danger. Catherine was also in danger, but of this Robert was ignorant. What did he know about her, except that he loved her ?

Abbé Mésange was the first to feel alarmed for Catherine ; he had just learned, purely by chance, how imminent was the peril which threatened her, and what was its nature. On the Rue Saint-Dominique he met Marie-Thérèse de Dombes, who was just leaving her grandmother’s. Like all the La Feuillades, whose château in Provence was a furnace, she would pretend all summer to be “just passing through” Paris. When she saw the old priest, she rushed up to him breathlessly :

“Well, my dear Abbé, we have our war !”—as if it were the one thing in the world which must be had immediately, without hesitation. He preferred to hope, and answered guilelessly that he was going

to the Hôtel Leopolski for news, that Catherine had returned from Russia the day before, and that he regarded her return as a happy augury of peace. She replied, with a violence which left him dumb-founded :

"The *Austrian* ? One might well ask how *she* comes to be here !"

When Mlle de Dombes used the epithet which the revolutionists had applied to Marie Antoinette, it meant nothing less than the pillage of the Hôtel Leopolski and Catherine's head at the end of a pike. Abbé Mésange was in no doubt of her intentions. He warned M. Beau, whom he met on the stairs. And both of them, seething with indignation, agreed that in case of need they would answer for Catherine with their lives before any court in the world. When they arrived, she was already warned. Mlle d'Enragues had telephoned to ask when she was leaving Paris. Her aunt La Feuillade had advised that it be without delay.

Toward evening the sultry heat of this long day brought all the population of the island swarming toward its tip. A meeting of public consternation was held under the aspens. Newspapers seemed to blaze in the hands of readers who faced the setting sun. Soon the fires subsided. At nightfall the fishermen, the petty tradespeople, the laundresses, the book-stall keepers, the women with children trailing at their skirts, all seemed to realize that war had come, and dispersed to their homes ; but then the young people appeared in couples, and they were so numerous that night under Catherine's windows, in the magic triangle of the embankment, that the island seemed to be seething in a mutiny of love.

At nine o'clock in the evening, an attaché of the

Austrian embassy, Count Khoun, telephoned from his club on behalf of the ambassador. They had learnt of Catherine's return to Paris from the Vienna newspapers. All the movements of the Leopolskis were announced in the Press ; it was one of the methods by which the old Countess governed her family. By the order of the ambassador, Fritz Khoun was coming to give Catherine the latest reports ; he would also help her to make arrangements for departure. At ten o'clock he left the club with M. d'Entragues, who was accompanying him in order to have a subject for conversation at dinner next day in the Rue Saint-Dominique. The fellow clubmen, one a foreign diplomat and the other an uncle by marriage, reached the Hôtel Leopolski at the very moment when Robert, leaping from a taxi, was preparing to rush through the door. The three men looked at one another. Only Ricard was recognized. His fame had made his face familiar even in town houses and clubs where aviators were never entertained. They were regarded in such circles as merely a higher sort of acrobats, but their feats were interesting. And, as it was now several months since the Leaguers had announced Catherine's liaison with the flying man, M. d'Entragues decided, on seeing Robert, that his own visit was not in vain. Besides, he was proud of his taste in women, and he judged his little niece to be very attractive.

They found Catherine in the corner salon, where she had spent the day between Abbé Mésange and M. Beau, imprisoned by her own anxiety. She rose to receive them, and made the necessary introductions. Doubtless the general confusion had bewildered her. With the air of casting down a gage, she presented the diplomat to Robert Ricard and the Marquis d'Entragues to M. Beau. Abbé Mésange knew everyone

already. They stood before the open windows and watched the crowded lovers on the embankment. Abbé Mésange implored Fritzi Khoun to prevent the war. The latter explained just why it was no longer possible for any man to halt the powers ; and there was something inhuman in his explanation, as if he were describing the mechanism that operated a society of automatons. Somewhere there was a button, which somebody had pressed. You heard treaties snapping like triggers, and you saw that Europe had been caught in the wheels since the battle of Sadowa. The machine had been running since the Congress of Berlin. To be exact, it had been running since the reign of Louis the German. It was a pity that primogeniture was unknown in the days of Charlemagne ; if the first of the emperors had been given a single grandchild instead of three, all this trouble would have been avoided. There was a faint smile on Fritzi's face as he described the clockwork of history.

Robert Ricard stood at the window without listening. He was already fighting, not against the inevitable, but with it. He had been struggling all day ; this was his reason for feeling so calm when evening came. To face death was only a professional habit with him ; but the declaration of war had given him an opportunity to ask Catherine whether he should hope for death or life. At the moment when he should be receiving the answer to this all-important question, why did he find her surrounded by these old men and diplomats, who were raking the embers of old controversies ? The Abbé was still insisting that Fritzi Khoun should stop the war.

"Indeed, sir," he was saying, "it is impossible that an emperor who bears the noble title of Apostolic

should try to crush a little people. You must admit that it is forbidden by the Gospel. You are a Christian, sir !”

“If you will permit me, my dear Abbé,” interrupted Aymard d’Entraques in a quavering voice, “it was the Lord Himself who told us that we must render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar’s.” And turning to Catherine, he added : “So, my dear niece, you are going to leave us ?”

Robert did not seek to understand, but nevertheless he trembled.

“It will be easily arranged,” said Fritzi Khoun ; “my cousin can leave with the ambassador. We have put her name on the confidential list we are sending to the Quai d’Orsay.” He continued : “Unfortunately, we cannot put our seals on the house ; diplomatic immunity extends only to the embassy itself. However, if you wish to protect some of your pictures, the ambassador will consider it a privilege to oblige you. . . .”

M. d’Entraques again interrupted : “I say, Fritzi, this year we ordered fifty thousand pheasant eggs in Austria, half for me and half for my brother-in-law, and both La Ferté and I are more than a little worried. . . . Do you by chance know anyone . . . ?”

When M. d’Entraques and Count Khoun left the house, they separated on the embankment by mutual agreement. It was useless for them to be seen together on the day of mobilization. Notre-Dame, the interminable, had just struck midnight. The first of August was beginning. . . .

Abbé Mésange was heard to mutter, after the departure and separation of the two clubmen : “Their souls are pheasantries !” An unbearable silence had fallen. Catherine approached Robert, who had said

not a word all evening, and murmured : "We can take M. Beau to his house . . . if you don't mind ?" She spoke timidly as if she were fearful of offending him. Did he understand that she wished first of all to leave this house with him, and that she would only feel at home when they were in the street ? He rose ; they went downstairs without speaking. When they reached the embankment, they brushed past all the lovers, who must also have had their reasons for not returning home ; they were like so many shadows of Catherine and Robert. Meeting a cruising taxi at the foot of the Rue Chanoinesse, they climbed into it with M. Beau. They followed the Seine to the Place de la Concorde. Paris, in the face of danger, was keeping vigil. The Champs-Élysées still hummed with voices under the morning stars. When they reached the Arc de Triomphe, Catherine was lured by the shadowy gulf of the Rue Matignon ; she asked to be driven to the vacant Rookery. At the forbidden door, she threw herself into her tutor's arms and wept. He could only say : "My child, my little child, this war is impossible !"—as if the despair of Catherine, the child of his spirit and the only creature he loved, would alone suffice to prevent the war.

The sight of her tears brought Robert to the highest pitch of exaltation. He thought only of means for defending France and Catherine together, since both were equally menaced. He understood nothing of what had been said, except that the woman he loved was leaving Paris against her will, and for reasons which could not possibly be admissible. He formed a thousand mad plans for saving her, the least of which was to hide her in his mother's house. He would go to the military governor of Paris, and if necessary to the President of France. He would answer for her

with his life. M. Beau also suggested that she could stay with him, by assuming—with what joy!—her maiden name. They continued to discuss these wild schemes until their cab turned into the Rue de Ponthieu. But Catherine, as they rode, saw a vivid picture of the dangers to which she would be exposing her friends. Since she was their enemy, she loved them too much not to part from them. Already she realized the difficult situation she had created for Robert. He had telephoned her several times that fatal day from the Ministry of War, without knowing that he was speaking to an Austrian. She had never thought of herself by that name, which has an unpleasant sound for French ears, but Marie-Thérèse de Dombes and the others had forced her to accept it. Drawing fresh courage from the despair of her companions, from the sympathy of the country from which she was being exiled, she told M. Beau that she was returning to the Ile Saint-Louis, and asked Robert to escort her there while the darkness lasted.

They drove as far as the Cours-la-Reine. When they came under the shelter of the great trees that line the Seine, they dismissed the cab and waited on a bench till it turned the corner. Then they embraced, in a long silence. At daybreak, moving slowly under the plane-trees, the leaves of which are always the first to fall, they walked toward Notre-Dame. Catherine told Robert the story of her life. Too late to hold or defend her, he slipped his arm round her shoulders. She described the Rookery, her childhood . . . one's country is really one's childhood. . . . He regretted that he had believed her to be Russian: how could he fail to realize, merely by hearing her talk, that she was French? For him, as for all Frenchmen, it was nothing extraordinary to hear his language spoken by

foreigners. He expected no accent in the woman he loved, and would have been astonished to find one ; in the eyes of those who do not read the "*Almanach de Gotha*", Leopolski and Isvolski are equivalent, both of them Russian or Polish names, and Slavic in either case. Catherine, at the time of her engagement, had been equally vague, being acquainted only with the good-hearted Poles of children's stories, who bore such names as Boginski and Cozrgbrlevski, to rhyme with Leczinski and Poniatovski. She described old Francis Joseph, the polite gentleman of whom they told her one day that she was a subject. She had never thought it was true ! She described Poland, Lemberg, Zamosc, and the great massacres of birds. Was it her fault that the hypocritical tears of Maria Theresa had fallen on the map of eastern Galicia ? *Elle pleurait et prenait toujours*—the more she wept, the more she took. If the Czar, in 1772, had wept and taken more, their present misfortunes would have been avoided.

She was at a loss for words to describe her marriage ; she was ashamed of her career as a wife. It had been nothing but a school of prostitution, in which she had tried, under the direction of an old procuress, to please a man who did not love her. She had forgotten that she herself had ever loved Adam. She said merely that her husband had forsaken her a week after their marriage. Robert at once dismissed him as a madman or a fool. But indeed, he hardly listened to her explanations. She had every charm. He knew her to be innocent and falsely condemned. Never had he attempted to learn anything about her past, which he had judged summarily from her face, and of which he hoped to become the master. What did it matter whether her passport was Russian, Austrian, or Rumanian ? Since he loved her, he was

sure of being able to change all that. A man knows how to take away a woman's nationality and give her another. And the law confirms his belief in his powers of transubstantiation. Robert recited the French Civil Code as if it were a magic formula : "*A foreign woman, on her marriage to a French citizen, assumes the nationality of her husband.*" His love could perform this miracle. Why had Catherine waited so long . . . ? Sitting on a bench that faced the old Louvre, they made all the resolutions which should have been made a year before. The chimes of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois struck the hour of their vows : four o'clock in the morning. All the steeples of Paris prepared to sound the tocsin. Princess Anna's counsels became their programme for the future. The war could not possibly last till Christmas. Robert's ideas on the subject were simple, and he expressed them in pat phrases : it would be death or victory within three weeks. Catherine was to go, not with the Austrian ambassador and his suite, but alone toward Italy. In Rome she would make arrangements to have her marriage dissolved, as Anna had advised. She could then return to Paris, for, having filed suit for divorce, she would have resumed the lost nationality which was to save her. . . .

Their progress was retarded by their goal, which was separation. The day was breaking when finally, still embracing, they came in sight of the island. Catherine, leaning on Robert's shoulder, stood a long time staring at the river and the house crowned with foliage. Was it not this mansion, with all its mirroring windows, that had brought her into Adam's life ? "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house !" And was it not the Seine that had tempted her, as, in this curious spot, it tempts all lovers ? Paris, of

which she bore the name and inhabited the heart—Paris was casting her out in the day of danger, because her heart had once chosen unwisely. Catherine turned her head, and looked at the face of Robert, from whom her salvation would come. It was the face of a man whose love might have given her the keys to the city, if she had not rebelled against life. In the calm twilight which precedes day, it wore a look of almost paternal mildness. Seized with respect, she disengaged his arm, took his hand, and led him toward Notre-Dame. At five o'clock in the morning, the great portal still was closed. She wished to try the Red Door, and as she found it bolted like the other, they could only kneel at the top of the steps, on the porch framed with wild roses. There, outside the Church, both of them prayed. They separated in the first rays of the sun in the little garden which surrounds the apse of the cathedral.

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On August the 2nd, she heard all the tocsins ringing at once. She was in the centre of the alarm. If her windows had not been wide open, they would have broken. Catherine also would have broken without Robert; he had opened the future to her; he had allowed her to breathe the air of deliverance. But, with the passing hours, she must make up her mind to leave; the military authorities would make no allowance for a state of soul. When the moment came for action, Catherine could no longer understand the decision she had made the night before. She wondered why she had not chosen imprisonment in preference to flight. She forgot that when she decided to go away and, in obedience to just laws, to leave both France and her lover, she was merely conforming to her preference for definite situations, to her instinct for choosing the more difficult course,

to her sense of honour. She was forgetting also that she had thereby hoped, in the language of military citations, "to merit well of the Fatherland". Her courage weakened several times. M. Beau came to the help of her weakness and only increased it. He offered to visit Mme de la Feuillade ; he would make an impassioned plea for her young relative ; she would let her heart be touched ; and perhaps, if Catherine announced her intention of getting a divorce and ceasing to bear the name of Leopolska, the duchess would consent to shelter her. Abbé Mésange had no difficulty in dissuading him from such a course. Their kinship with Catherine was felt to be so compromising by the good folk of the Rue Saint-Dominique that the duchess, early that morning, had sent word to the Abbé that she advised her niece to seek diplomatic protection, to flee the country—and above all, no farewell visits ! These ladies were also leaving, but for Provence.

The Russian ambassador came to see Catherine during the day. He would have liked to offer her the hospitality of his embassy, but he had been warned that tongues were wagging against him. He was accused of the feminine boast : "This is my war !" He denied the statement, saying that he had merely foreseen the war. He was like a physician who does not claim to be the author of an epidemic merely because he has diagnosed it. Since, by breaking out, it was proving his foresight, he had wished to provide Russia with the powerful remedy of an alliance with England. *This* was his work, and he was proud of it. He told Catherine that when the day came for him to sign the treaty dismembering Austria—and this he was confident of doing—he would feel the same regrets as if he had just broken some antique

in order to replace it with a pine cabinet bought freshly from Maple's. With these words of a connoisseur, he bade her farewell, first offering to use his influence with the Italian ambassador, since she had chosen to live in Rome. Sir Philip Gay also came to comfort her. He proposed to move his personal effects into his office in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré and to give Catherine his apartment, if she would consent for a time, and merely as a matter of form, to become Lady Gay. In this way she could remain in Paris until England declared war. In the midst of these contradictory arrangements, which arranged nothing, she was handed an almost incoherent letter from Mlle d'Enragues, written just as she was leaving. It warned Catherine that if she delayed her departure, she would be denounced to the authorities. She had ceased to think of anything but Robert; her presence in Paris might compromise him. Everybody told her that the war would be short and she believed it, since the nature of catastrophes is to be sudden and brief. She would go to Rome as she had promised Robert, to prepare for her metamorphosis.

Leaving Sir Philip Gay to procure her passport and that of Félicie Billochon, who refused under any circumstances to desert her, she went out toward evening, alone with M. Beau, to visit Père Lachaise. The heights of the cemetery were crowded with people who had come with a single thought: those who stayed behind were promising the eternally disarmed that they would be defended. In all the throng, Catherine alone had come to tell her rooted dead that she was deserting their soil, against her own will. Facing the sky, that impalpable resting-place which Uncle Charles-Adolphe had chosen, she accused herself of not having followed his counsel. "One

doesn't marry a Pole," he had said in his tutelary voice. She thought herself to blame for his sorrow, and even more to blame for that of Robert, who had gone to war after promising to marry an enemy. She left the hill, knowing that she was also leaving "the land where our dead lie buried," another expression for the fatherland. She drove back with M. Beau to the corner of the Rue de Ponthieu, but did not take him to his door. Innocent as she was, she had become almost a leper in Paris, and began to feel an aversion for herself. At the Hôtel Leopolski, she found Abbé Mésange and a letter from Robert, which a motor-cyclist, the mysterious messenger of the armies, had left at the Abbé's lodgings. It implored her to visit the Rue Chaptal before her departure. Must she obey this imperious request? She feared to expose Robert's mother to the contagion which had so horrified her relatives in the Rue Saint-Dominique. Abbé Mésange finally convinced her, and went forward as a scout to announce the nocturnal visitor. As she entered Mme Ricard's drawing-room, she felt that she had knocked at the right door, and having conquered death, was entering by magic into her own childhood. The rosewood table was not her grandmother's, but it was nearly the same, and the light was the same exactly. Old peaceful things were bathed in the calm air; only one side of them shone in the lamplight; their shadows had not moved for a long time. An old lady who still was nimble sprang from an arm-chair, took a few steps toward Catherine, and held out her arms. It was through a prism of tears that they saw each other for the first time, and recognized each other. Mme Ricard examined her foreign daughter, and, as she found her glances even lovelier than her eyes, she trusted her. Catherine,

who had felt lost since Robert's departure, was finding herself again. . . . Nothing could be more natural than to see herself in this little parlour, and nothing, in a way, could be more surprising. When it was time to go, she felt that she was once more bidding farewell to the Rookery. Hardly had she recovered her childhood when she felt the sorrow of leaving it, the pain of waking from a dream. In memory of her furtive visit, she carried with her a photograph of Robert which she need not hide wherever fate might lead her ; it showed him in a little dress of English embroidery, at the age of three.

When Sir Philip Gay left the Hôtel Leopolski after making all arrangements for the difficult departure of a woman who could not resign herself to being an enemy, midnight was striking once more, and the third day of mobilization was beginning in the fortified camp of Paris. Catherine did not go to bed ; she stood watch for the first time at the prow of this vessel in the Seine. All night she heard the aspens and the hours ; high in the servants' quarters a cuckoo from the Black Forest, brought to the Quai d'Alençon by a Swabian valet of the old count, translated the hour of Notre-Dame into German. About four o'clock, a low rumble, a cracking of whips, and the clang of great hoofs on the pavements as the Percherons went by, gave notice that market wagons were rolling eastward toward the armies. Like all the women of Paris, she had someone at the front ; these wagons were rolling toward her lover. Only two hours to live ! A continuous shiver ran through her body, as through the trees of the river bank. It was the effect of insomnia on her youth. When it was nearly time to go, she climbed to the room under the eaves to say good-bye

to Angela, who wept and could not understand why her foster-child was leaving. Catherine explained that she must go away for a little while, but would return, and that afterwards she would stay in France for ever. It was to Angela that she entrusted all the keys of the house.

Sir Philip Gay came early in the morning to take her to the Gare de Lyon. She was swept into the train with the crowd, and let herself be deposited in her seat like a piece of baggage. Her departure resembled a series of swoons. Afterwards she would try, but without success, to live in memory through this moment when the ground gave way beneath her feet.

CHAPTER III

Rome, or The Passport

SHE had to spend several days in Switzerland, for, after receiving the latest news from Belgium, the other neutral countries had closed their frontiers. She carried her passport to the Austrian legation in Berne, to have it viséed. Félicie Billochon, who was more fortunate, went off to her embassy. She at least was travelling *Au nom du Peuple français !* But after the shining stamps had been affixed, those of the Habsburgs bearing the Cross of Lorraine, and those of the French bearing the lictor's fasces, the frontiers were no more open than before. It was necessary to wait until confidence returned, which it showed no signs of doing. The councillor of the Austrian legation, Ladislaus Sziepievicz, one of those Polish diplomats who are always better informed than the governments they represent, said to her gravely :

“So you are going to Italy, Madam ? You can stay there . . . for some time ; as long as our dear allies are good enough to remain neutral.”

Thereupon Catherine went roaming through Switzerland like a beast in a cage, fearing that if she entered Italy and if it declared war on Austria, she would be expelled. On the other hand, if it decided to be faithful to the Triple Alliance, her situation would be even more distasteful : she would be the prisoner of a country which was making war on France. She left Berne for Lausanne, where at least the people

spoke French in the streets ; she remembered an expression of Cervantes : "Rogues have a language of their own, which they call German."

She paid a visit to Geneva, where she was joined by Ladislaus Sziepievicz, who had become attached to her because he secretly shared her opinions. For a diplomat in Austrian service, his sorrow at reading the first *communiqués* of the German General Staff might seem extraordinary. However, it would surprise no one acquainted with the latent patriotism of the Poles, which was complicated in his own case by an admitted liaison with Countess de C——, daughter of the Marquis de Senac, a councillor-general for the department of Haute-Loire. Catherine was astonished at nothing ; she believed that the armies which menaced Paris were menacing the whole world, Germany included. Had they launched an attack against the sun, they would, in her opinion, have been hardly more insane. She remembered talking with German officers ; their little eyes had sparkled and their heels had clacked together when they merely heard a mention of this enchanting name. She imagined them suddenly yielding to their collective desire for Paris, which they had so often expressed in her presence ; but, not being experienced travellers, they rushed there on foot, on horseback, dragging cannon along with them, when simply with a railroad ticket, and one at a time, it would have been so simple ! When he heard of the French defeat at Charleroi, which he, too, called a defeat, Ladislaus Sziepievicz asked the minister to be placed on the unattached list. When he read of the defeat at Morhange, he threw discretion to the winds and offered his resignation. Catherine, too, would have liked to resign, but for a woman listed by marriage

in the Diplomatic Annual, the matter was vastly more difficult. She stayed in Geneva because she could see the mountains of French Savoy from her window. For long hours she watched the westward-flowing Rhone, and the westward-driving clouds which were rallying to France. She languished in Switzerland, knowing that she could not apply to the Swiss courts for a divorce, and being acquainted with no one except Ladislaus Szepievicz, who had no authority to dissolve her marriage. At Rome, she would have the support of her sister-in-law. The Papalina, who knew of her marital troubles even before they occurred, would help her to put an end to them. Catherine committed the error of believing that Adam's other sisters would share the emotional reactions of the eldest, who was not a daughter of Leonilla Leopolska. In her eagerness to learn when the frontiers would be open, she read ten newspapers a day and abandoned all attempts to understand them. She knew that France was invaded, although she believed it to be saved; she knew that Robert was still alive the week before, from the evidence of enigmatic postcards. No matter how recent, they were only partially reassuring. Each passing moment since Robert had written them was a menace to her security; she was afraid to look at her watch. Sometimes she was on the point of begging to be given Billochon's French passport, but she recoiled from the thought that the maid would have to accept hers in exchange. This tender and courageous girl, who was of Catherine's age, had become her confidante; they consoled each other. One day Félicie brought her the *Gazette de Lausanne*, which contained surprising news: French aeroplanes had been seen flying over Saint-Imier. Like many Frenchwomen of her station, Félicie Billochon had the simple

soul of a shepherd girl; she saw Robert descending from the clouds to announce that France was saved. In the evening paper, they read the matter-of-fact comment of the Swiss General Staff. Its heading was: "The Saint-Imier Aeroplanes Were Only Buzzards." It ended with these words: "The eye-witnesses themselves admit that their so-called aeroplanes might have been these birds. It is also a matter of record that several people, in the course of the morning, saw *three unmistakable buzzards* soaring above Saint-Imier."

Notwithstanding this solemn denial, of which she failed to see the unconscious humour, Billochon remained secretly convinced that Robert had sought to look down on them from the Heavens, like a saint. As for Catherine, though she had lost the faith in miracles which her maid preserved intact, and though she did not believe that Robert had come seeking her through the skies, she nevertheless imagined him soaring upwards through the mists of Flanders, and falling—for she could see him fall! He was only a bird driven before the gamekeepers, and neither his divine skill nor his piercing eyes would protect him from the guns. She could picture this fall exactly, for her memory offered thousands of morbid images: pheasants falling in a parabola, partridges falling perpendicularly, pigeons falling like a petal, and swans like something crucified; she had a fearful selection of visions from which to draw. To escape them, she would tell her beads in a cramped little Catholic church which she had discovered in this capital of Calvinism. Souls in deep torment require some very simple occupation. That of telling her beads, which she now shared with Billochon as she had shared it before with Maria Robinet and Sister

Gervaise, might seem utterly unreasonable, but the effect of it was to restore her reason. Once more she began the practice of piety ; she carried the latest of Robert's postcards on her breast as a hair-shirt and scapulary ; she reinvented all the tested instruments of faith. One day when the two of them were praying in this church, they saw a card hanging before the statue of the Virgin ; it bore the inscription : "Our Lady, grant that nothing happen to my husband !" Catherine was sorry that she had never thought of this prayer, which corresponded so exactly to her greatest anxiety : "Grant that nothing happen to Robert . . . !"

A letter from M. Beau made her even more impatient to set out to Rome. He had seen Robert, who had spent an afternoon in Paris on a military mission. He seemed disturbed to hear that she was still in Switzerland. Catherine could not write to explain that her reason for delay was her fear that Italy would enter the War on the side of France. Such a confession in a letter might well have amazed the censor. Realizing that the length of her stay in Switzerland seemed inexplicable to Robert, who might fear that her resolution was ebbing away, she resolved immediately to leave Geneva.

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Catherine set out for Rome at the end of August, in haste to rid herself of a nationality so alien to her nature that she had been able to assume it without her knowledge, and to hide it unconsciously from the man who loved her. She was resolved to recover her liberty, the magnificent condition of her return to France. At Domodossola, the Italian flies swarmed into the train. It was hot as an oven. The customs officers looked first at her and then at her passport.

One of them said, "*Tedesca ?*" with an air of doubt. She did not know what to answer. At Milan, she stepped out on the platform ; every man there paid his respects, made a *faccia amorosa* as she passed, forgot the War, and thought only of love. In the restaurant, her profound ignorance of any language except that taught by M. Beau won her as many interpreters as there were men round the buffet. Indeed, she was a little dismayed by the popularity of France, but she was flattered at being taken for what she was and was not : a Frenchwoman.

When she came to the end of her journey, she was disappointed to find that her sister-in-law was absent from Rome. The Papalina was spending this fiery season in Nettuno, a former castle of the popes near Ancio, by the edge of the sea. The arrival of the younger Countess Leopolska caused endless gossip in the Palazzo di Venezia among the members of the Austrian embassy, several of whom were her relatives. The discussion spread to the Knights of Malta and the guardsmen ; it was heard in the Vatican and even in the cloisters, where the Leopolskis had still other cousins. Thus, from the very beginning, she met with a thousand opportunities for visiting the city. She did not suspect that her one errand there would meet with an equal number of obstacles. Moreover, she had no comprehension of the beauty of Rome. It was too hot, in the first place, and she gasped for news from France as she gasped for air. She wrote the Papalina, asking her advice before proceeding with certain measures of which she herself knew nothing, except that she was decided on taking them. There was something in the tone of her letter which put the fat woman on her guard. She sent her little husband to find Catherine and drive her to Nettuno. The

journey there was made through a landscape by Claude Lorraine or Hubert Robert, almost without leaving the galleries of the Louvre. When she reached the maritime castle of the San Giovanellis, Catherine was received with all sorts of affectionate demonstrations, which the Papalina, out of malice, exaggerated till they became ridiculous. They bore the same resemblance to the tenderness of Anna Lvovkovitch that a parody bears to a masterpiece.

"To my breast, to my heart!" she cried, casting a sidelong glance at Catherine out of her little sloe-black eyes, and extending, not her arms, but the tip of her fan. It was too hot for sisterly embraces.

She led her guest to a high terrace overlooking a formal garden such as Catherine had never seen. It was a submarine landscape. Extending to the foot of the medieval fortress, it was formed by the ruins of Nero's palace, with its rooms still outlined in perfect squares and with crumbling walls covered with seaweed as green as a box hedge; it had the air of being a garden by Lenôtre, seen under glass. In Catherine's memory, this sunken monument would always be connected with the discovery she made there: namely that a family coalition of great power was being directed against her, and that its aim was to preserve the slight chance which she represented, of saving what?—the possession, by a certain human group, of a castle in Galicia which was certainly destined to no greater eternity than this palace whose submerged foundations were visible under the Tyrrhenian Sea.

"You really don't mean," said the Papalina in her facetious voice, "that you are going to be so cruel to all the family as to ask for a divorce! Because there is a war? Because you can't live in Paris any

longer? But if Paris is taken by the Germans, as there is every reason to believe, there is nothing to keep you from returning there to-morrow!"

She reasoned with Catherine as with a spoilt child. So she didn't wish to be an Austrian? To have Francis Joseph on her passport? But what did it really matter? Was she herself an Italian or a Roman? She was Polish, which is to say that she was independent, for Poland did not exist. Why shouldn't Catherine be Polish also? Did she say that Adam was no husband to her? Well, that was hardly news; the Papalina had always known that Adam was much too charming to be a husband. . . . For nearly an hour she continued in this tone of banter, under which she hid a real anxiety. "The little fool is in love," she said to herself, "and naturally she's in love with a Frenchman. One might have expected as much!"

The news from Zamosc was unfavourable. Not that she was disturbed by the advance of the Russian armies—the Papalina knew that her brother-in-law Lvovkovitch would install himself in the château without breaking any one of the seven dinner services—but because Adam, like a toothless lion, was letting himself be completely cowed by the animal-trainer. He had taken her with him to war; and if Catherine, by leaving him, removed the only obstacle in his path, what would become of the inheritance? Under the combined menace of her whip and her revolver, he would marry the Seminole. The Papalina loved nothing better than melodrama. She acted out several parts, laid several plans, became evasive, and amused herself generally. She would indeed put Catherine in touch with the members of the Roman Curia, whose business was to separate such couples as they judged

should be united neither in Heaven nor on earth, but it would not be without warning these prelates beforehand. She loved Catherine too much not to protect her against herself. She pretended to be helping her ; but at the same time she cautioned her that cases of this sort are usually long-drawn-out. The War would be ended and another begun before she would have time to change her passport. The Papalina appealed to her heart, and told her that she would cause them all a great deal of pain by leaving a family which, after all, asked her only to bear its name and its nine tiers of pearls, even in hot weather !

This speech made Catherine feel that she had been very rash to announce her intentions, and that she would have done better to confide in any man—in a stranger like Ladislaus Szipievicz, for example—than in a woman whose kindness was so forced, and who sinned through excess of wit as her sister Clementine sinned through excess of stupidity. But it was too late to withdraw her confidence. Once she was given the opportunity to submit her plea, she knew that she could count on herself. Her case was clear ; she would make it luminous. She had consulted beforehand with Abbé Mésange, who had suggested two lines of argument. First, she had not been married in her own parish, but at the cathedral of Versailles ; she could therefore plead that the proper forms had not been observed. She had thought she was being married to a Polish resident of Paris, when her husband was really an Austrian of Galicia. Hence, there was an error of person—and what an error ! She was confident of her powers of conviction. As soon as she found herself in the presence of a man, her arguments went straight to the mark. She was disconcerted only by women ; her mind had not been trained in their

domestic school. Guessing that the Papalina would besiege the Curia, she reflected, but too late, that she should have begun with the civil authorities, and had them decree immediately that she was no longer Austrian. That must be possible, and at least would rid her of her passport. However, her civil authorities were hidden far away, in Dacia Felix, and war had blocked the paths which led to the East.

The Papalina returned to Rome, where she was better able to supervise the affair and could provide more obstacles to its success. In order to give Catherine the illusion of advancing toward her goal, she advised her to request an audience with Dom Wenceslaus, who had charge of all the ladies seeking annulment. He took three days to answer the letter, which had been delivered by the Princess San Giovanelli in person. The events of these three days, from the first to the fourth of September, rendered Catherine's errand useless ; they would lead her back into error, reconcile her with her mother-in-law, send her on a pilgrimage to Vienna and beyond, even into the heart of Germany, and make her the prisoner of everything she had tried to repudiate. She spent her three days kneeling in the churches ; she spent them in St. Louis-of-the-French, praying before the tomb of Mme de Beaumont, who died, as one should die, "in love and desperation" ; she spent them with Montaigne, with Stendhal, with Chateaubriand. Out of one sentence from the "*Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*", she reconstructed the whole French empire, for which she yearned : "In those days, Rome was a French city, capital of the Department of Tiber. . . ." She was overwhelmed by Rome. Her eyes were blinded by monuments much vaster than those of Paris, but always lacking in foreground. She perceived that her sight was

adjusted to the long perspectives of France, and that without these distances which existed in her mind as a standard of judgement, nothing she saw was more than relatively pleasing. During these researches, not into Roman antiquities but into herself, Catherine's fate and many other fates were being decided between the Ourcq and the Marne—a fitting place of judgement for a woman who, like all her ideas, had been conceived in France.

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"So you wish to have your marriage annulled by the Curia?" said Dom Wenceslaus. "And why, if I may take the liberty to ask? So many things and in so short a time! To marry, unmarry, remarry, perhaps? . . . What hustling and bustling, and all for the three days which are given us to live! Have you fully reflected on what you are doing, my child?"

She refused to be enthralled by the voice of eternal irony. Three days in which to be happy; three days in which to live her life: she would be content with such a boon. . . . She said everything she had to say, and more. She revealed—ah, how rashly!—that she wished to strip away the Nessus-shirt of her nationality.

A nationality . . . ! Dom Wenceslaus smiled and closed his eyes, as if in a dream. Then, in the same benignant voice, he asked whether nationality could really be said to exist. Did it matter in the eyes of God? She had let herself be over-impressed by the War, which was only a temporary madness. . . . And had she been forced to leave France, Paris, and her mansion to comply with military laws? Trifles! . . . She would forget them all. Dom Wenceslaus then explained God's method of abolishing warfare. There were circles, and larger circles, and still larger

circles ; people had fought from door to door and from province to province ; at present the nations were fighting one another, but soon whole continents would be joined in battle, and then wars would be ended for ever, having passed beyond the limits of our planet. Countries had become personalities. France, Germany, England, Italy, were so many women ; herein lay all the difficulty. Everything was becoming a personal question. . . .

Since she was now in Rome, she should take advantage of her opportunity to visit the convent of San Anselmo, which was surrounded by lovely gardens descending to the Tiber. And if she enjoyed music, she could listen there to plainsong.

"And you will realize, my child, that this celestial harmony is produced by human voices, which are those of former Germans, Frenchmen, Scotchmen, Austrians, and Belgians, who all sing in unison, gathering every evening in the same place, at the same time, and in the same garb ; they are our brothers. The War ? It is nothing ; there are no nationalities in Heaven !" And he added : "I hear that Count Leopolski has not acted like a Christian husband ; I am indeed surprised, and deeply sorry. But after all, what is the treason of one man ? Since you are in Rome, my child, you should take the opportunity to enter St. Peter's, some morning when the sun is shining on the golden letters inside the dome. There you will find inscribed : *Tu es Petrus*. . . . And who was Peter, that they should have built this church over his tomb ? My child, he was a friend who betrayed his Friend. And you must acknowledge notwithstanding, that if he was chosen out of twelve, who in turn were chosen from the whole people, it was surely because he was the best. . . ." Dom

Wenceslaus then advised her to submit her request in writing, and promised to examine it in a spirit of charity.

Catherine spent the next few days in rambling through the city. Everywhere she saw death, and the adversity of human fortunes, and fallen columns. Everywhere were ruins, yawning into the sky and filling her with terror. Her heart yearned for Paris, the vertical city which unlike all others is classic and contemporary at the same time, and in which there are neither ruined monuments nor a single trophy without a victory. She descended into the forum, one night when the moon was full. She was afraid. She wished to flee, to go rushing out of this tomb where her feet seemed more entangled with every step. She repeated the tragic words: "There death seems to be born. . . ."

One day as she was returning from the Palatine, blinded by the dust of empires which was swept only by the winds, she found her brother-in-law waiting in the lobby of the Grand Hotel. The fall of Paris was now only a question of hours. He showed her telegrams. She said with great simplicity: "I don't believe you!" left him without another word, ran upstairs to her room, and locked herself in, wishing to die alone.

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"The check on the Marne," was the modest name by which impartial observers, during the first weeks, referred to the deliverance of Paris. Events were such as they have always been since there were men to foresee them and other men to decide them: that is, they were unforeseen. This unorthodox battle, which created its own rules and exceeded its own

limits, raged for seventeen days. During all this time, Catherine's reactions were sound: she was utterly illogical, hoped against hope, rebelled against despair, and profited by the instinctive courage of men fighting for their homes. Days followed when she learned from others what she already knew from her own faith: that the Marne was a victory, because Robert was living and Paris had been saved. But before she had time to realize that nothing was finished and that joy is not an ending, she received a telegram from M. Beau, addressed to Félicie Billochon, announcing that her brother had fallen inside the German line, that he was a prisoner, and that he was not seriously injured. This captive brother was Robert.

Catherine went seeking through Rome for a dark and lonely chapel in which to pray, and found not one. The Catacombs were full of tourists. After wandering all day through the blinding sunlight, in a country where the trees cast no shadow, she returned to her room and drew the curtains, so that she could find darkness at last. She had need of advice, and there was no one to give counsel, not even the night! The moonlight outside her window was bright as day. . . . Early in the morning she received the following note from the Papalina: "Von Kluck has saved Paris, but Zamosc has fallen into the hands of the enemy; thanks to which our mother, relieved from the cares of your household, will be in Rome day after to-morrow." She must lie, and quickly. She must say that she had changed her mind and decided that divorce during war-time would be a sort of disloyalty. She rushed off to Nettuno and delivered this message to her sister-in-law, feigning an accent of resignation. The Papalina's beady eyes shone

with pleasure at having read her mind. "Something has happened to Catherine's lover," she thought.

Together they went to the station to meet the old Countess, who had been driven from home not only by the Russians, but by the Papalina's alarming letters about Catherine. She lost no time in describing the invasion. "Everything went off very well," she told them. "We hoisted a white flag over the clock-tower at twelve o'clock. At five, Brussilov's cook arrived to take over the kitchens." Leonilla was even spared the trouble of reading a lecture to her daughter-in-law. Catherine explained that under the painful circumstances, she would be showing bad taste to separate herself from Adam. Her dear sister's arguments had convinced her, and she had come to agree with Dom Wenceslaus on the pitiable briefness of human fortune and misfortune.

The three ladies held council at Nettuno, and decided to adopt a waiting course. But where should they wait? They were of the opinion that the two armies would continue to advance and retreat in Galicia, and that Austrians and Russians would follow the same tactics—those of a pendulum. Till the day when they could return to Zamosc with the honours of war, their wisest course, the dowager believed, would be to establish themselves in Vienna. Catherine felt ready to brave all dangers and suffer all misfortunes in order to find the prisoner; and she was even willing to fall once more into the trap of marriage which her mother-in-law had set for her. But meanwhile she would beg for assistance from the good Princess Lvovkovitch. Anna would surely help her. She was the daughter of a German princess, and had preserved the affectionate sort of relations with her mother's family which make it possible, during a war,

to discover traces of the missing, the prisoners, and the dead. The International of nobles, which had proved no more effective than the other International in preventing the War, was at least functioning now to soften its consequences. Formed on the surface of the nations, as on a river covered with drifting ice, the aristocracy seemed, in the course of its meanders over furious waters, to be mapping the future unity of Europe.

Catherine learnt that one of the unexpected results of the War had been to transform her Russian sister-in-law, like the old Countess and many of their relatives, into a sort of post-mistress. All these ladies wrote daily to other post-mistresses and masters—the King of Spain, the Grand Duchess of Baden, the Duke of Connaught, the Grand Duchess Vladimir—and weekly sent them enormous bundles of correspondence. The European War was such a purely domestic struggle that it seemed to be aimed at replacing the admirable but bankrupt system of the International Postal Union by a picked force of amateurs. With the help of these volunteers, Catherine sent a letter to Anna Lvovkovitch, enclosing a second letter addressed to Robert. She begged the Princess to write her in Vienna, telling her where and how to get in touch with him. Catherine might also have written the margravine, who was honorary colonel of a line-regiment and whose relations with the General Staff might have proved serviceable; but she feared this hypocritical Valkyrie. Besides, her instinct warned her that Margrave Ernest had best be ignorant of her researches. Toward the end of October, she sent her Billochon back to Paris. On the thirtieth of the month, alone with the old Countess, but in hopes of finding and helping Robert, she bravely crossed

the frontier of the Central Powers. It was the day when Paris breathed again, and when Gallieni left the Lycée Victor-Duruy to establish permanent headquarters in the Hôtel Meurice.

The week before Christmas, Catherine set out for Leipzig with a provision of sweaters which the Russian court was sending to certain of the officers captured in the battle of the Mazurian Lakes. Her real goal, however, was the reprisal camp of Scharnhorst, in Magdeburg. More precisely, it was the dungeons of the citadel.

CHAPTER IV

The Fortress of Magdeburg

IN Magdeburg, or rather in its suburbs, Catherine was received by Princess Anna's maternal aunt, the dowager Grand Duchess of Berg and Nassau. Her house was anything but grand-ducal. "Monabri" was a simple suburban villa, and was furnished exactly like the home of some notary's widow at Ville-d'Avray, except for the presence on the mantelpiece of a golden frame surmounted with the eagle of France, and containing the cockade which Napoleon had worn at the battle of Jena. The grand duchess was a descendant of Stéphanie Beauharnais, the pupil of Mme Campan; she had inherited the manners of this governess who, uniting the Empire to the *Ancien Régime* across the gulf of the Revolution, had trained Hortense and Stéphanie as if they were daughters of Marie Antoinette. The grand duchess's parlour—it could hardly be called a drawing-room—was furnished in the same noble tradition as Mme Fenouil's lodge. However, the artistic side of her nature was revealed by the presence, first of a gilded harp presented to her by the Queen of Holland, and second by a paint-box with silver oil-cups, which came from her other grandmother, Queen Louise of Prussia. Preserved under glass on the mantelpiece, beside the cockade, could be seen the rose which Napoleon had offered to this fair suppliant after the battle of Friedland. "And does Magdeburg go with it, Sire?" the queen had

simpered. But the Emperor had no intention of giving the fortress with the flower. Such as the vicissitudes of history had made her, half imperial French and half Prussian, Grand Duchess Stephanie spoke French, ate French food, and knitted in the French fashion—that is, with her fingers bent; to knit in the German style, she would have had to raise a threatening forefinger toward the sky like the spike of a *Pickelhaube*.

Her mind was stored with courtly romances, and she seized the War as an opportunity to pour out her heart in works of charity. She had the medieval tastes of the Napoleonic era, and regarded every prisoner as a Dunois, a Lautrec, or a Charles of Orléans. Because she was descended from the Queen of the Rose, the gates of every fortress stood open before her; and it was thanks to her assistance that Catherine, after many delays, evasions, interventions from the higher authorities, supplications, and prayers—after having given her word in writing that she would bring nothing to the prisoner except sugar, woollens, and biscuits—finally succeeded in penetrating into Robert's dungeon.

When they saw each other, they had been expecting each day for three weeks that they would be released from their agony of hope. For lovers who have been kept apart, is there any better place of meeting than a prison? The narrowest possible: a cell, a folding cot, a pattern of bars through which to read the secrets of the sky. Robert had made three attempts to escape; he had fully deserved his dungeon. By opening his arms he could touch both walls; by closing them on Catherine he could make his prison vanish: the lovers were free! The world belonged to them; a world without pain or impurity,

completely uninhabited. And within them was a force which might have sufficed to repopulate the world. By this force they were laid low. Together they fell, as lovers inevitably fall. Together they recovered their senses ; they had lost them together. And thinking of the danger they had just incurred, they embraced once more in a transport of gratitude, as if they had saved each other from death. They spoke ; they embraced ; they even dared to laugh, in that utter confusion of all emotions which is happiness. The prison and the four thousand feet of barbed wire that surrounded it had helped them to triumph over themselves. In this dungeon they had found a security, a silence, and guarantees of secrecy which were worthy of their passion. All that delight acquires from being fleeting, and embraces from the nearness of their ending, and love from the foes of love, was theirs to taste. They had only one hour to themselves, and this they knew. When the hour struck and they parted in body, they believed that nothing could separate them in spirit—not even death, through which they had passed together. If it is true that laws consecrate only that which is human, Catherine's transmutation had been accomplished when she left the German prison : Robert had naturalized her.

Grand Duchess Stephanie, whose soul was of the romantic era, was fired with enthusiasm by a love so unfortunate. Thanks to her devotion and her entreaties, the lovers saw each other once more, but with the greatest difficulty and only in her presence. This was all they could obtain from the governor of the citadel ; he refused to grant another private meeting. Being in charge of a prisoner whom the military authorities wished specially to punish, and

being a man, he realized as soon as he saw Catherine that nothing would be more fatal to his purpose than a visit from such a woman. She had to resign herself to leaving "Monabri"; for the presence of a Polish countess, charged with a mission from the Russian government, might compromise even the inheritress of Queen Louise's rose.

A system of correspondence was planned before they separated; they would send messengers between Vienna and Magdeburg; the grand duchess herself would carry his letters to the captive; since she was an octogenarian, she could visit Robert without causing the governor to fear that his sentence was being unduly mitigated; she would carry writing materials in her muff and return with Robert's answer. Meanwhile she would make every effort to have him released from his dungeon, and she hoped afterwards to procure his exchange for some German prisoner of equal importance. Considering his military value, she knew that this would be difficult. However, these payments in kind sometimes involved considerations of another nature: matters of kinship, or names that threatened to die out, or other love affairs. . . . Thus, the ladies who occupied themselves with this sort of barter were aided in their commerce by several scales of value. The grand duchess went searching through her files to discover a counterweight for Robert Ricard. It was a long task. On several occasions she thought she had struck a bargain, but each time her laborious negotiations were met with a refusal from the Quartermaster-General. The German staff held a grudge against the aviator for looking down from the skies, like God, and witnessing Von Kluck's lack of genius.

During these months of separation, the end of which

was uncertain, the help of the grand duchess enabled Catherine and Robert to write real letters, in envelopes. Their previous correspondence had been confined to postcards, and was like an intimate conversation in public. They made use of their new opportunity as if they had just discovered the art of writing ; it was a spring from which keen joys gushed forth, but like most other springs, it was not perennial. The first letters were potent cordials, quenching their thirst, cooling their lips, and burning their palates ; the lovers read them and were drunk with delight. But this moment of happiness, which their memories should have rendered eternal, did not last ; words lost their force ; they contained a little less balm with every reading ; even the most absolute statements did not suffice for ever ; others were needed. Where could they be found ? Their real need was one which letters could not satisfy.

Meanwhile Catherine was imploring Anna Lvovko-vitch to restore her lover, and she made the same plea in each of her letters to the Grand Duchess Stephanie. The time had come when the English prophecy of the War was being confirmed. People had ceased to believe in a sudden peace, and each man realized that it was his duty to carry order into the midst of the catastrophe which had become his dwelling-place. Hostile courts performed innumerable acts of charity, which were sedulously concealed, since it was of prime importance to keep public opinion in a state of cannibalism. Italy having entered the War, the central offices of Christian charity were now in belligerent territory, and new headquarters for international generosity were being established in Switzerland. Prisoners began to be interned there, on parole. The Helvetian Confederation,

which had already proved that Germans, Italians, and Frenchmen could live under the same government, within the same frontiers, was now being filled with belligerents who had been rendered neutral by a mere convention. Men in hostile uniforms began to fill the streets of Zurich, Lausanne, and Geneva. Had they been carried a few miles farther, they would have been obliged to kill each other. Robert, alas ! was never on the list of these pawns taken from both sides in equal numbers, so as to cancel off. Catherine stayed in Vienna, where she was discontented with everything she saw, but powerless. The old Countess had established her headquarters in the Hôtel Sacher. There she received visits, but those she paid were only to the hospitals. Besides making charitable rounds through the Auersburg Palace, now transformed into a reconstruction hospital, she was lavish with her attentions to patients in the different convents. Catherine never accompanied her ; what was the use ? She was unable to console the poor soldiers of Francis Joseph, since she could speak no Polish, Czech, Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, or Turkish. . . . Italian and German she also lacked, and even Rumanian, alas !

When summer came, she spent long days in rambling through the gardens of Schönbrunn. Sometimes, when she looked at an open window which they told her was that of the old emperor, she felt like making a trumpet of her hands and shouting to waken the conscience of this octogenarian. Could he really wish to be escorted into the other world by millions of young men ? She strolled with Robert's letters through Schönbrunn, where Napoleon once had strolled. In these dark days which threatened never to end, his ghost was the only companion for those

who were forced to live in German lands. Sometimes of a Sunday, she visited the section of the château which was open to the curiosity of visitors. These appeared in no great numbers: there were half a dozen middle-class families from the suburbs and a few lonely officers just discharged from the hospitals. As in the Kapuzinerkirche, they strolled past the Habsburg relics with no great interest; but as soon as it was a question of Marie Antoinette or the Empress Marie Louise, their interest was roused and they surrounded the guide. Even after the guillotine, even after Waterloo, they were agreed that of all the archduchesses only these two had made a brilliant marriage. She saw the portrait of the "Gallant Gardener"—the little King of Rome, with a watering-pot in his chubby fingers and a straw hat partly hiding his yellow curls, sprinkling a bed of flowers in the Tuileries. She remembered that in Berlin, the house of Prince von Plön had been crowded with souvenirs of the Grand Army. She saw Potsdam, where Voltaire had quarrelled with Maupertuis, and St. Petersburg with its memories of Diderot. Wherever she had been driven by her imperious destiny, whether to Ragusa, Rome, or the heart of Poland, she had thought: "Europe is French or it is nothing."

The Austro-Russian quadrille was continuing round Premyzsl and Lemberg. Zamosc had once more fallen into Austrian hands. Adam was returning from Trieste, where he had been campaigning that winter in a milder climate. His brother-in-law Auersburg had declared that he was tired of occupying the Polish Versailles alone, with only his regiment for company. Catherine was asked whether she would go to Zamosc with her mother-in-law to serve as a force of occupation. She was unwilling to change

her address because of Robert's letters ; already they were terribly slow and disappointing. The idea of losing them altogether was more than she could bear. When she saw her husband come dashing into the Hôtel Sacher, she pretended to be ill, nor was it all pretence ; she was so terrified at his arrival that her temperature rose two degrees. She was always under the eyes of the old Countess, who told her one day: "If the War would only bring you and Adam together, I should bless the War." She was spared her blessing. The Seminole followed in Adam's retinue, disguised as a girl scout. After spending a week in Vienna to recruit his forces, the colonel of the Leopolski Hussars continued his campaign to Zamosc, in an automobile which he had requisitioned from the garage of Count Leopolski.

The colonel's lady, because of her health, was forced to remain in the Hôtel Sacher. There also, the clandestine messengers of the grand duchess would be able to find her. Catherine thought only of excuses for returning to "Monabri", but she was prevented by the assurances she received from day to day. "A little patience !" wrote the grand duchess. A Hesse and a Salm had just been taken prisoner. They too would be weighed in the scale. Perhaps both of them together would be enough to counter-balance Robert. As soon as one hope vanished, another appeared. German aviators had fallen within the French lines, but it was later discovered that they had died from their wounds. On another occasion, the grand duchess received several requests for a young Englishman of great price. She would refuse to give him up until the English court brought pressure on that of Russia, which in turn would act on that of Mecklenburg through the Grand Duchess Vladimir,

who still had considerable influence in Germany, since her son-in-law was a blood brother of the German emperor's brother-in-law. . . .

Catherine thought that in 1051, when King Henri I of France had married Agnes, the daughter of the Grand Duke of Kiev, the policy of family alliances was already initiated. Its purpose was to cover Europe with a net of love which all the fury of the nations could not break. The trouble was that kinship had gone bankrupt. The royal hybrids were powerless against the nationalism on which their thrones were based. Without exception, they hated each other secretly in times of peace and were of little service during a war.

Catherine had fallen into a state of dejection, when at last a letter came from "Monabri", announcing that Robert's ransom had been found: the Kaiser had decided to make a birthday gift to the Queen-Mother of Spain. Two members of her family, one a nephew by marriage and the other a son of her foster-sister, were prisoners in France. Wilhelm ordered them to be exchanged for Ricard the aviator, but on one condition only: he was to be interned in Switzerland. Almost at the same time, Catherine received a letter from Anna Lvovkovitch, along with a package containing a sum of money and the keys to her chalet at Bregenz, on the Austrian shore of the Lake of Constance. Catherine was to spend some days there, in order to arrange certain papers of the first Countess Leopolska, pay the watchmen, and gather the forget-me-nots, which had not been picked since the beginning of this fearful War. Charged with this household mission, she left Vienna for the Alps in the month of May, 1916.

The French and English prisoners of Robert's

group, before their final internment in Switzerland, were quartered at Friedrichshafen, which is also on the Lake of Constance. There, in partial liberty, they were to spend three weeks—time enough, that is, to assume the look of men and to forget the numerals of the regiments they might have encountered on the way ; or at least time enough for their information to lose its value. Such were the provisions of the code for prisoners of war—a sort of international book of etiquette, containing rules which were both laudable and childish, but principally childish.

One year and six months of imprisonment had made Robert a desperate creature. He emerged from his cage like a haggard bird, soiled by captivity. The year before, when Catherine had paid her miraculous visit to Magdeburg, his pride was still intact. He had been a prisoner for only a few months, and he had tried three times to escape. Since then he had lived alternately in hope and despair because of his mistress. The anarchy of love which she carried into his prison had bent his will, broken his heroic ambition, and changed his faith. When she saw him again, it was only to face her greatest difficulty. She must lead him back to war as one leads a rebellious invalid back to health. Before coming to Bregenz, she had laid a plan for his escape ; for, if he crossed the frontier with the other prisoners, his career as a soldier was ended : he would fall into the trap of his given word and remain in Switzerland till the end of the War, till the inconceivable peace. This was not Catherine's intention. What she desired above all was to bring him back to himself. In her warrior soul, she refused to exchange him for another—for the non-combatant, the weak-hearted creature that he was sure to become.

In the chalet where Princess Anna's mother had spent her happiest days, they met once more. He repeated all the words of folly which a man who has lost control of himself can pour into the ears of the woman he loves too well; the circumstances gave them a note of unusual gravity. Gently she refused to believe that he loved her more than life, more even than France; and the more he insisted, the more firmly she resolved to save him from such a fatal delusion, which could not be permanent. That which he had so fervently desired from her, since their meeting in the dungeon, she now gave him, thinking in this way to deliver him from the passion which was overwhelming his reason. Her experience with Adam had convinced her that there was no surer means of destroying love than to yield to its prayers. But she found that for a man exalted by privations, who loved her under these dramatic circumstances, this simple method did not suffice. He talked only of retiring from the world, of stealing her away, and of living alone with her in Tahiti, under the stars of the blest. Catherine, meanwhile, was speaking a different language, that of a man. She reminded him of everything he had forgotten for her. She spoke of France, without which she could not live, and Paris, which she would never cease to love; she related a thousand incidents of her childhood and made Robert do the same; they both had spun tops in the Champs-Élysées, and screamed with delight at the puppet-show, and strolled along the *quais*. . . . Finally, having brought him back to himself, she promised that as soon as he had escaped, she would put an end to their torment by leaving for Rumania, where she hoped to win a divorce, change her nationality, and be given a passport

with which she could cross the French border. Under her maiden name, she would make what was called the Grand Tour, by way of Russia, Sweden, and England. . . .

Ladislaus Sziepievicz had promised to help with the escape. Two hours before the prisoners were to enter Switzerland, Countess Leopolska's limousine left Bregenz for Lausanne, by way of Basel. When it crossed the Swiss border, the chauffeur produced an Austrian passport. The French consul at Ouchy received the fugitive. The following day, Robert crossed the Lake of Geneva toward France. He carried a new passport which had been given him *Au nom du Peuple français*, and was followed by the eyes of Catherine, who remained on the other shore.

CHAPTER V

The Hybrids

THE offensives of June and July, 1916, had the usual effect on the retractile frontiers of Europe, all of them closed. Catherine, having entered Switzerland to effect Robert's escape, was forced to remain there. She had fallen back into the trap. Each time she went to the Austrian consulate in Berne and asked for permission to visit Rumania, the officials looked embarrassed and explained that perhaps they could give her a visa "next week". No letters came. From Robert she had received a last undated note, which was full of strange reproaches: ". . . I shall help to defend the Paris which you love so much, and of which I am deeply jealous. You can be sure that I love you more than Paris. . . . When you think of me, let it be only of me . . . and I will go into the wilderness to hide my bitter regrets for you, my love, my love . . . !"

How could she answer him? Now that he was in France, every letter which passed between them was a violation of the law; she did not wish to lead him into "correspondence with the enemy". The time for postcards had passed. She had lost her Billochon; she had not applied for a divorce; she had returned to the Central Empires because of Robert, and for him she had made peace with her husband's family. She now found it impossible to reach that far Rumania where women can escape from marriage, and where

she might have wakened from her false nationality as from a dream.

On August 27th, before the frontiers had opened for a moment, or had shown even so much as a crack through which she might have slipped, came a crowning misfortune. This country, her own, finally declared war on Austria-Hungary. From the moment when King Ferdinand's armies began to fight for the liberation of all the Rumanians, Catherine's last hope abandoned her. She would have to remain Austrian. . . .

Without any warning, the old Countess arrived in Lausanne at the end of October. She came to assure herself that the reports furnished by Catherine's new servant were correct. Billochon's successor was a woman from Luxemburg, supplied by the dowager and accepted by the younger countess because she spoke French. To be served in any other language was unthinkable. Catherine was therefore betrayed in the patois of Luxemburg.

"If the War would only reconcile Adam and his wife, I should bless the War," Leonilla Leopolska had said. This reconciliation had already taken place . . . at least in her imagination. An imaginary reconciliation was sufficient for her purpose. What she herself believed, she could make the world believe. Her son, at the Hôtel Sacher in Vienna, had spent a week under the same roof as his wife. This much was known. . . . According to her old adage, once was enough. This, fortunately, was also the opinion of the legislators. She installed herself in Switzerland, at Catherine's side, and there she stayed. She too was brave, in her own fashion.

The elder and the younger Countesses Leopolska could be seen passing together through the wan light of hotel lobbies, where all the old offenders against

the laws of nations, the guilty non-combatants, were serving their time. In the wicker armchairs, under the indispensable palms of Swiss hotels, could be found a society of hybridized creatures which included specimens from all the dynasties of Europe. Most of them were women, who are liable to be infected, by marriage, with the canker-sores of an incurable nationality. At the Hôtel de Montreux lived the Duchess of Madrid, the widow of Don Carlos, a woman to whom the Papalina referred as "the legitimate wife of the legitimate king." After all, she would be queen of France, if the rules were ever followed. . . . The duchess was forbidden to live in Paris—"merely to please Quinones," as she claimed—but continued to haunt French consulates, pleading that her three maiden names were derived from the old fiefs of Rohan-Guémenée and Rohan-Montbazou, situated in France. She also insisted on her ethnic character, alleging that she was Breton. However, she was a Rohan of Austria. It was now a year since Venice itself had cast her out. Among her neighbours were the following: a daughter of Czar Alexander II, who, although Russian, bore no less than three German names—a Danish princess, Greek by adoption, and consequently a victim of ostracism—a Belgian woman who had married in Hungary—a Spaniard who bore the historic name of Princess Metternich. The last had just visited her mother in Andalusia, after making her way through France under a title she had borrowed for the occasion from the inexhaustible storehouse of the Spanish grandees. And all these camouflaged ladyships, as they wandered on the banks of the Helvetian Styx, would come together in the evening by twos and threes, at tables where waiters were passing denationalized dishes. Spectres,

they ate of that fish with a spectral taste, the grayling. And all of them knitted, following their secret preferences in wools which betrayed the colour of their opinions: an Austrian inclined to horizon blue, a certain Russian to *feldgrau*, and several off-colour Germans to khaki. Those who favoured the Entente were frank in their preference; those who favoured the Central Powers claimed to be neutral or pacifist. This difference alone was enough to condemn Germany. Women who bore famous names sent parcels to the prisoners of war. In the evening they met to commiserate each other on having more than five thousand soldiers called *Martin (Jean)* on their lists: as a matter of fact, it would have been more convenient if the warriors of Justice and Democracy had all borne illustrious names, the only names which can be remembered. The Papalina, to whom the War was an occasion for new sallies, said as she strolled past the green tables where the society of great hybrids was playing bridge:

“I hope that all of you win!”

CHAPTER VI

In Which Catherine Becomes a Visionary

DECEMBER and January came, and with them the invasion of Rumania, the defeat of its armies, the fall of Bucharest. There was nothing further to prevent Catherine from returning to her birthplace with an Austrian passport. But what was the use? Justice had ceased to exist in Rumania.

As the days passed, she realized that while her own time was drawing near, the birth of peace was still distant in the future. She made her will; she wrote many letters. She did not suspect that they were read in the hotel, and were never delivered in spite of their being stamped. Her mother-in-law was also busy with correspondence. Francis Joseph had been succeeded by Emperor Charles, and the throne of the Habsburgs, so long without a queen, was now occupied by a hybrid, the Princess of Bourbon-Parma. This opportunity led to talk of a separate peace between hybrids. The old Countess redoubled her correspondence; each day the Luxemburger would make several trips to the post office. She carried letters there and brought them back again—not all; merely those of Catherine. “Our little Paris,” wrote the old Countess to the margravine, “suffers greatly from her present condition; she has strange moods; she weeps and thinks herself lost. I have always regretted that she did not bear her child during the first year of her marriage, as is right and proper. Childbirth is more difficult at twenty-six than at

eighteen ; like everything else in the world, one must get used to it, and the sooner the better."

Catherine was suspicious of her mother-in-law's enthusiasm for the right of primogeniture, and after due reflection had written to each of Adam's sisters, fully confessing her infidelity ; so that if she died, no one in the family could believe in the legitimacy of her child. She had also written to Adam. Her letters were taken to the dowager, opened, considered gravely, and they were even pardoned, after being destroyed. Catherine was hoping that her conduct would be denounced, and she felt uneasy at receiving no blame whatever. Each time she tried to accuse herself, the old Countess had interrupted her confession, saying that she knew all, and did not wish to know more. It was a misfortune, she added, for which her son was chiefly to blame ; she loved Catherine none the less, and would help her in the ordeal of maternity as she had already helped her after the hunting accident.

When her time drew near, Clarens was chosen for her retreat. A terraced villa there, with its sunny veranda hidden between a cemetery and a walled vineyard, satisfied the need for solitude of a young woman who was going to bring an illegitimate child into the world. The old Countess allowed Catherine to preserve the illusion of secrecy, with which she even helped to surround her, as with a graceful and deceptive shawl. The indiscreet Papalina had returned to Rome. Adam did not write ; but why should he ? From the margravine, from Clementine Auersburg, and even from the prioress, Catherine received vague letters about her health, extending the best of wishes and advising her to take good care of herself. They were dictated at a distance by that past-mistress of correspondence, Leonilla Leopolska. No letter came

from Princess Anna, who was now face to face with the last convulsions of czarism. Here on the eastern shores of Lake Lemman, where Italy seemed to begin with the sun, the month of February was as warm as May. Catherine's sadness grew as the days passed by. She risked a confession to the Abbé Mésange, by letter, asking that Robert's mother should hear it read. Along with it went a copy of her will. But the thick envelope which contained the secret of her heart met with the same fate as her other letters; the Luxemburger took it to the post office to have it registered and brought it back, still warm, to the old Countess. A few days later, Catherine received what she thought was a reply from Abbé Mésange. He exhorted her to patience, sent her his absolution, his benediction, and prayed as always that the War would end in general forgiveness. This letter, like the others, was suggested by Leonilla Leopolska, who had taken pains to inform the abbé of her daughter-in-law's expectations, of the reconciliation with Adam, and also of her own anxieties.

It sometimes happens that women are troubled in their minds by the presence in their bodies of another soul. Catherine was over-sensitive, and suffered from being haunted in this way. The old Countess, by slow degrees, led people to believe that her daughter-in-law had lost her reason during pregnancy, and so provided against the risk of Catherine's writing other letters to Paris which might escape her supervision. But she had written to no one except the abbé, and only to confess herself. She had remembered a quotation from Veuillot as repeated by Dom Wenceslaus: "The Catholics, who are never foreigners to each other. . . ." She had made it a point of honour not to correspond, during the War, with any

person in France, man or woman, until her marriage had been dissolved. Hence, she was astonished to receive a letter from Julie d'Enragues, mailed from Paris and very correctly addressed to Clarens. The envelope was surrounded with a band of paper bearing the official inscription : "Opened by military authority." The letter, which was long, seemed interminable to Catherine. She learned in detail how her friends and relatives had held a great council to decide on her defence, and how it had been decided in this assembly that she was indefensible. Her peregrinations in wartime had been judged severely. She had been seen everywhere : in Germany, in Switzerland, in Austria, in Italy. Ricard the aviator had become her dupe ; she had made him believe that she was Russian. On his return, this poor lad had been forced to suffer the rigours of military justice because of her. They spoke of bringing him before a court martial. In any case, he was being kept at the rear as an aeroplane mechanic ; they no longer dared to send him to the front. The suspicious attitude of his superiors seemed only too natural in view of a story which was making the rounds of Paris. It seems that a former maid of Catherine's had talked ; she claimed to have seen a French aeroplane which had entered Switzerland to carry news to her mistress. She had mentioned the name of Robert Ricard. . . . The letter ended with a piece of friendly advice : Catherine would be wise not to think of returning to France within less than ten years "after the final victory". Even then, she had best confine herself to Biarritz or the Riviera. . . .

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On the second of March, 1917, in the middle of the night without there being the least pause in his

heartbeats or the slightest warning of his senses to trouble Robert's slumbers in the fortified camp of Verdun, where a full moon guarded against surprise and permitted the men to sleep that night—Catherine, twisted with pain, biting her hands to stifle her cries, tortured and seeking to find a rhythm for her tortures, heard, after twelve hours of struggle, the bells of chloroform which were ringing for the Nativity. She was sleeping when her son came into the world ; she was sleeping when, taken from her, he uttered his first cry ; she was still sleeping when Leonilla Leopolska drove off with the doctor and two merchants of the neighbourhood to declare the child at the Austrian consulate : Louis Ladislaus Charles August Victor Leopolski.

Catherine was slow to recover, and slow to understand why she could not have given birth to a child whom Robert might recognize ; and yet the old Countess explained the matter fully—the law is simple ; the child was not born out of wedlock, but within, and no power in the world could make it illegitimate. The old priestess of the sacred tribe had succeeded : the Leopolskis of Perm, the infamous Permites, were finally vanquished. Zamosc, round which the immense War revolved harmlessly—Zamosc at last was saved ! Catherine looked at her victorious son. She was weak ; as yet she could do nothing for his defence, nor he for hers ; he was so small, so immensely small ! But all day she held him, ravished with joy because he weighed, because he was warm, and because he lived. She laughed in her sleeve as she embraced him. Already they had made a pact together. She herself would nurse him, so that for the first year he should take nothing except from her, and thence from Robert. . . .

What good and numerous company he bore her in the solitude of Clarens! Through him she held intercourse with all the French nation. When she recovered her strength, her first thought was to give him a less inaccessible fatherland. The house of Countess Leopolska, at Clarens, became the centre of the movement for the independence of Poland. That year, all the Polish exiles played Chopin on the shores of Lake Lemán; they played for the re-Polonization of the Vistula and for the triumph of the country of Chelm. For "Polonia Restituta" a muse was needed and two were found: the dowager, having adopted the views of her dear daughter-in-law, was helping to preside over the rebirth of liberty. The old huntress had sniffed the wind.

After the armistice of Rethondes, the elder and the younger Countesses Leopolska offered their mansion on the Ile Saint-Louis as a residence for the Polish delegation to the Peace Conference. The Hôtel Leopolski was no longer sequestered as alien property. Catherine left first, to put the house in order. She was accompanied to Paris by her son, aged eighteen months.

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As soon as she crossed the French border, she sent Robert a telegram, to which she received no answer. She learnt from Abbé Mésange that Mme Ricard had died the year before, and that Robert soon afterwards had gone to Morocco. After his escape from Germany, he had found an aviation service which had realized his dreams without him. The new planes were unfamiliar. Other aviators had been the heroes of the War: Guynemer, Roland Garros. . . . When he learned from his mother, and then from Abbé

Mésange, that Catherine had remained in Switzerland and had there been reconciled with her husband, he thought she was lost to him, because he already doubted her. Of the falsehoods spread by Leonilla Leopolska, he was the appointed victim. . . . He had asked for assignment to an infantry regiment which was defending Verdun. Aviation he had definitely abandoned; it reminded him too much of Catherine. Wounded at Verdun, and susceptible to lung infections since his wound, he nevertheless remained in the army. However, he had insisted on being transferred to Morocco in the service of supplies, in order to expatriate himself. He could not bear to see Paris without Catherine. Having left for Africa in 1917, he was still there after the armistice.

The day after her arrival, when Catherine walked through the Place de la Concorde on her way to a luncheon at the Crillon with Sir Philip Gay, who was serving as a British delegate to the conference, she could no longer recognize the statue of Strasbourg. Under a mound of fresh flowers it seemed like an altar. She realized that the first effect of victory would be to dim all memories of the past. She accepted the idea that Robert had forgotten her. His love was older than the War, which had lasted four years. Can a man's constancy withstand the only ordeal which counts in a woman's eyes—that of time? Catherine believed it could not. The only fidelity she had known was that of her old professor, whose love for her had been only an ideal, like the love that men reserve for a goddess or their country. . . .

M. Beau, suffering from paralysis, was confined to his room in the Rue de Ponthieu, where for many months he had held communion only with a ghost. Catherine brought her son to see him. She confided

her secret, so that the old tutor might carry the news along with him to his new home. "Dear master," she said, "we shall bring him up in France. . . . In a very few years, I shall teach him to repeat, 'Our ancestors the Gauls,' as you taught me. But for him it will be true. . . . We shall keep him in Paris," she repeated. "He will play in the Tuileries; he will study in the Latin Quarter. . . . Afterwards, when he is twenty-one, we shall send him on long journeys, so that he will learn to regret. And when he is thirty, I shall be old and ready to die. . . . Before dying, I shall tell him the truth; after all, it costs only twelve hundred and seventy-six francs for an honest man to become a French citizen. . . ."

And she thought she had stolen the fire of Heaven for her son.

THE END

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